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James MacMillan: Retrospective Modernist

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Abstract

Although he describes himself as a 'modernist', tradition has been an integral aspect of the music of James MacMillan from the beginning of his compositional career. Three traditions in particular permeate his works: the cultural tradition of his native Scotland; the religious tradition of the Catholic Church; and the tradition of music from past models to the present day.

These three traditions and their relationship to the present are explored in depth in this thesis, which argues that MacMillan should be termed a 'retrospective modernist', given the emphasis he places on the relationship between past traditions and the present. Part I examines MacMillan's political and cultural retrospective modernism, initially in the general context of autonomous and political music, and then more specifically in relation to Liberation Theology, while the remainder explores MacMillan's complex relationship with Scotland, past and present. Part II discusses religious retrospective modernism, comparing MacMillan with Wagner and Bach. The theological implications of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* are discussed in conjunction with *The Sacrifice* and *St John Passion*, and the following chapter addresses three liturgical issues concerning both MacMillan and Bach: musical settings of the Christian Passion narrative; the composition of music for congregational participation; and the practice of recycling music in mass settings. Part III continues with this topic of musical recycling and quotation in MacMillan's works, first in comparison with Mahler, and then extending to consider the technique of polystylism in the music of Ives, Berio, Schnittke and Maxwell Davies, all of whom have been significant influences on MacMillan.

Finally, an in-depth examination of the tension between the concepts of tradition and modernism concludes the study. While some modernists see this tension as irreconcilable, MacMillan considers it to be a positive, creative tension. Issues relating to high modernism, antimodernism, postmodernism, pluralist modernism and finally retrospective modernism are discussed here, demonstrating why the latter is the most appropriate term to describe the music MacMillan composed in the period 1982-2010.

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Introduction: A Threefold Tradition

"I think there's a three part concern for tradition: one is purely for a musical tradition, evolving from music of the past; then of course there's the religious tradition with the Catholicism; and then there's also the re-examination of a national, Scottish tradition."¹

James MacMillan made the above statement in February 2011, shortly before the completion of this thesis. Although neither the structure nor content of this research had ever been divulged to the composer, the three traditions he mentioned as being so integral to his music also form the scaffolding for the present dissertation. These three traditions form the fundamental basis for this thesis' argument in defining MacMillan as a 'retrospective modernist'. This term is therefore defined in three strands: cultural/political retrospective modernism; religious retrospective modernism,; and musical retrospective modernism.

Aims

This study explores the relationship between past and present from cultural, religious and purely musical perspectives in the music of James MacMillan. It adopts a holistic approach, considering the composer's entire output up to and including 2010. While the dissertation takes its cue from the music itself, which is its constant point of reference, it seeks to understand the development of the composer's work in light of his changing political views, and subsequently their implications for his religious stance. The repercussions of the composer's early espousal of Liberation Theology and his gradual move towards a more traditional commitment to the doctrines of the Catholic Church, and his simultaneous rejection of Marxism, are seen in the context of two distinct versions of modernism. These two models present on the one hand a radical rupture with tradition, and on the other hand, continuity with it. In this study I argue that this constitutes the shift in MacMillan's perspective on modernism from that which is evident in his early

¹ In conversation with the composer, 11.2.11

works, to a sense of modernism that seeks continuity with tradition: 'retrospective modernism'. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that his involvement in/rejection of Marxism has fundamentally coloured his perspective of the three traditions discussed below, and it is especially the concept of 'year zero', which MacMillan interprets in relation to Marxism, that makes a significant impact.

Central to this study is a close examination of the extent to which musical quotation and self-quotation pervade his music. Indeed, it is surprising, given the remarkable frequency of these practices from very early in MacMillan's compositional development, that these two related but distinct areas – examples of his musical retrospective modernism – have been almost completely neglected in previous research. It is the aim of this dissertation to reveal not only the dense web of interconnections created by this use of quotation in MacMillan's work, but also to suggest the ways in which the composer employs such devices as a means to create a sense of continuity across his developing body of work, demonstrating a personal retrospective modernism where his earlier works influence his more recent compositions.

The study also presents the first musicological (rather than sociological) interpretation of the 'Scotland's Shame' debate, discussing not only the political implications of MacMillan's speech, but also how the issues relating to this debate were translated into his music. This includes works written both after *and before* the speech itself was delivered in 1999, testifying that Catholic-Protestant sectarianism had undoubtedly been a concern for the composer more than a decade before he made the speech.

Methodology

In contrast to all the current available research, the present study is the first to assume a holistic approach, rather than focusing on a single work or time period. Inevitably, this does not mean every work by MacMillan is discussed, but by examining the majority of works in his compositional output, certain recurring themes are identified. These

themes, both musical and extramusical, and evident across works spanning some thirty years, express much about the composer's temperament, and this could not be achieved by a limited focus on a small number of his works.

Direct and regular contact with the composer has been central to the methodology of the research. This study is the first PhD thesis to have benefitted from frequent interaction and interviews with MacMillan, in person at conferences or concerts, in numerous interviews in London, Durham or the composer's own home in Glasgow, and remotely via email. This places the study in a unique and highly privileged position, for the composer's generous contributions have been invaluable in the clarification of several key topics.

A number of works are subjected to detailed musical analysis to illustrate and clarify certain points. Because MacMillan's music so frequently relates to an extramusical source or narrative, the connection between the musical and the extramusical is very strong, and an analytical approach to the music itself often reveals insights into the external impetus, especially when, for example, a musical reference or quotation is embedded so deeply into the fabric of the score that it is not clearly discernable by listening alone.

Research Context

The research context for this study falls into four categories, the first of which is the music itself. Although it may be taken for granted that a dissertation dedicated specifically to MacMillan would include specific references to his music, it is worth stressing that the present study engages with the musical texts themselves to a considerable degree. More than one-hundred-and-fifty musical examples support its claims, taken from the sixty-one scores consulted. The majority of these refer to MacMillan's music (forty-three of the sixty-one), ranging from 1982 (*Etwas zurückhaltend*) to 2010 (including two mass settings and the part-song, *Lassie, Wad Ye Loe Me?*).

In addition to the music itself, the primary literature also offers insights into the composer's perspective on a range of important issues. MacMillan has contributed to Devine's *Scotland's Shame?*, which includes his (MacMillan's) original speech, 'Scotland's Shame', as its opening chapter, and a postlude by the composer at the very end of the book. This is one of several books to which MacMillan has contributed, for he has also written about sectarianism in Scotland for Joseph Bradley's *Celtic Minded* series, including *Celtic Minded: Essays on Religion, Politics, Society, Identity... and Football*, and *Celtic Minded 2: Essays on Celtic Football, Culture and Identity*. In addition, he has contributed chapters to two books focusing on the relationship between music and theology, including *Composing Music for Worship*, Stephen Darlington and Alan Kreider (eds.); and Jeremy Begbie's *Sounding the Depths: Theology through the Arts*, where MacMillan discusses the religious implications of his music theatre work, *Parthenogenesis*.

MacMillan has also discussed his music and faith in various published interviews, such as a 'Creation and the Composer' in *Creative Chords: Studies in Music, Theology and Christian Formation*, and in several very informative interviews in journal articles: Mandy Hallam's 'Conversation with James MacMillan' in *Tempo*, 2008; Richard McGregor's 'James MacMillan: A Conversation and Commentary' in *The Musical Times*, 2010 (though the actual interview took place in 2005); and Julian Johnson and Catherine Sutton's 'Raising Sparks: On the Music of James MacMillan' in *Tempo*, 1997, which is the most extensive and detailed account of MacMillan's music so far, including many significant contributions from the composer himself.

Given that MacMillan has now reached his sixth decade, the current published secondary literature about his music is still relatively limited. The only books that have been written about him are political, sociological or theological, rather than musicological. These include Scottish historian Tom Devine's *Scotland's Shame?* (2000) and Steve Bruce's *Sectarianism in Scotland* (2004), both written in response not to

MacMillan's music but to his controversial speech, 'Scotland's Shame', delivered at the 1999 Edinburgh Festival.

However, a number of journal articles offer some valuable contributions, such as: Keith Potter's 'Contemporary British Composers 1. James MacMillan: A New Celtic Dawn?' in *The Musical Times*, 1990; Raymond Monelle's brief but important discussion of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* in 'Scottish Music, Real and Spurious', *Music and Nationalism in 20th-Century Great Britain and Finland*, 1997; Patrick Russill's short reflection on MacMillan's *Cantos Sagrados* in *The Musical Times*, 1996; several articles by the journalist Stephen Johnson, who has also written many of the liner notes to recordings of MacMillan's music; theologian Hugh S. Pyper's 'Crucifixion in the Concert Hall: Sacred and Secular in James MacMillan's *The Passion of St John*' in *Literature and Theology*, 2009; and pianist John York's exploration of MacMillan's chamber music, 'The Makings of a Cycle? James MacMillan's Cello and Piano Sonatas' in *Tempo*, 2002. It should be noted that the journal *Tempo* also includes numerous reviews of the premiere performances and recordings of MacMillan's works, the majority of which are by Ronald Weitzman, with others written by Stephen Johnson, Nicholas Williams and Nicholas Reyland.

Several PhD dissertations, all from America, have focused specifically on MacMillan's music. The earliest of these is Timothy Rolls' *James MacMillan: An Analysis of Selected Works (1983-1997)*, in 2000, which is broad in its scope but very limited in detail, and often biographical rather than critical. It is remarkably brief. Two more theses were written in 2001: Mitos Andaya's *Seven Last Words from the Cross (1993) by Scottish composer James MacMillan (b. 1959): An Amalgam of Styles and Techniques*; and Timothy Brown's *A Comparative Analysis of the Socially Conscious Works of James MacMillan and Helmut Oehring, with "Dreams: A Work for Mezzo-Soprano and Orchestra"*. The first of these refers specifically to a single work and is barely sixty pages in length, while the latter focuses solely on political concerns in MacMillan's music, and the majority of the thesis focuses on Oehring

rather than MacMillan. The most detailed, accurate, substantial and recent of these theses is Andrew Kingsbury's *The Early Choral Music of James MacMillan 1983-1993* (2003). This examines eight choral works in great detail, and offers original information about the most enigmatic of these works, *Beatus Vir*. This has never been recorded, nor is it available in MacMillan's published output, and therefore Kingsbury's scholarship is commendable.

In addition to literary sources specifically focused on MacMillan, secondary literature dedicated to other composers is a major contributor to the research context of this dissertation. Undoubtedly most significant of all is Roger Scruton's *Death-devoted Heart: Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's Tristan and Isolde* (2004), which had a direct impact upon MacMillan's opera *The Sacrifice*. Other composers and key scholars referred to here include, but are not limited to: Andriessen (Robert Adlington, 2004); Bach (John Butt, 1991; Robin Leaver, 1997; Christoph Wolff, 2000); Berio (David Osmond-Smith, 1985); Peter Maxwell Davies (Richard McGregor, 2009; Paul Griffiths, 1982); Schnittke (Alexander Ivashkin, 1995 and 2009); Mahler (Julian Johnson, 2009; Henri-Louis de La Grange, 1974 and 1977); Boulez (Georgina Born, 1995; Dominique Jameux, 1991); and Messiaen (Peter Bannister, 2010; Karin Heller, 2010).

The final category of sources concerns a broader literature that touches on certain areas of this study but is conceptually oriented, rather than specifically about MacMillan. This includes literature focusing on Marxism, the French Revolution and the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Most significantly of all, it utilises literature centred on issues of modernism and postmodernism, drawing on sources from the key figures associated with definitions of these terms, such as Jean-François Lyotard, Charles Jencks, Jürgen Habermas, Frederic Jameson, and more recently Jonathan Kramer, Georgina Born and David Metzger.

Conceptual Context

The relationship between tradition and the modern is one of the themes that links all four parts of this study, especially in relation to revolution or a 'cutting off' from history. While it may be argued that both tradition and revolution draw from history to a significant extent, the former implies a harmonious progression, whereas the latter suggests a more iconoclastic approach. There are numerous examples of nostalgically looking back to previous traditions that have now been lost and attempts to resuscitate these in art. However this is not MacMillan's aim. His view of tradition – be it musical, religious or political – is to understand the present better by revisiting and accepting the past.

To this extent, the title of the current research, describing MacMillan as a 'retrospective modernist', must be carefully defined. The retrospective aspect is relatively self-explanatory, looking back to historical models: the history of a nation; the continuity of a religious tradition; the gradual evolution of music. With reference to music specifically, this includes using traditional techniques and forms or quoting musical material spanning several centuries, from ancient sources such as plainchant and early folk songs to twentieth-century modernists. Defining MacMillan himself as a modernist however is complex, and the current research considers him in this way with regard to both *modernism* and *modernity*. It is only after the three main traditions have been explored in Parts I-III that modernism as a concept – together with its numerous conceptual derivations - is considered in the concluding section. The first two parts, on politics and religion respectively, refer to the modern. By this I mean that they refer to MacMillan's concerns with the current state either of his homeland, Scotland, or of the Catholic Church. One of the ironies with regard to the latter is that while it may be reasonable to call MacMillan 'modern', it is impossible to call him a 'modern man', for with modernity has come an increased rise in secularisation, and this term is generally used to define someone of no religious faith. Secularization is intrinsically connected to 'modernization'.

Both Habermas and Wellmer distinguish modernism from modernity, defining the former as an artistic movement that fits into the cultural movement of the latter, which began with the Enlightenment.² However, when making such distinctions, it is erroneous to use the singular, for it is far more accurate to talk of 'modernisms'. Paddison considers all modernisms to be united by at least one common characteristic: "they are defined by the conflict between the process of societal modernization and the claims of tradition."³ Habermas saw a direct opposition between modernity and tradition: "Modernity revolts against the normalizing functions of tradition; modernity lives on the experience of rebelling against all that is normative".⁴ Shortly after this passage, taken from 'Modernism: An Unfinished Project', Habermas refers to Benjamin's construction of modernism's attitude to history (Habermas describes it as 'posthistoricist') and the self-understanding that accompanied the French Revolution. This time of political upheaval in France, and specifically its Republican Calendar and the revolutions of 1848, is of relevance to MacMillan's interpretation of Marxism, and is addressed in the conclusion with reference to the composer's controversial speech, 'Music and Modernity'.

Since the end of the twentieth- and beginning of the twenty-first centuries, however, Habermas' dichotomy between modernism and tradition has understandably weakened. This is due to several factors, including the inevitable passing of time and subsequent historicisation of the twentieth-century avant-garde as both a tradition in itself and as part of a larger musical tradition (albeit in a conflicted way); and also due to the process of globalization, where the conflict between modernism and tradition is relativized and thus "rendered invisible as part of the endless variety of consumer choice within an apparently tensionless steady-state of co-existing but separate stylistic developments."⁵

² Metzer, 2009: 240

³ Paddison, 2008: 68

⁴ Habermas, 1992: 128

⁵ Paddison, 2008: 68

Whereas ‘modern modernists’ such as MacMillan have accepted and indeed promoted the dissolution of this tension, older generation avant-garde composers such as Boulez firmly uphold this model of conflict; Boulez doesn’t even like to use the word ‘tradition’.⁶ This fusion of the traditional and modernist has been termed ‘postmodernism’ by many writers. Lyotard defined one of the central characteristics of postmodernism as the loss of credibility of the grand narrative or ‘metanarrative’. It might be asked how the modern artist can survive in the absence of any convincing belief. For MacMillan however, this has never been an issue, for although he may have “lost all faith in the political ideals of [his] youth”⁷, to use the composer’s own words, the religious motivations of his Catholicism have continuously inspired and penetrated his art.

Postmodernism, as the conclusion of this study testifies, is notoriously difficult to define, and even the terms ‘modernism’ and ‘modernist’ remain highly polysemic and problematic. Paul Harper-Scott has dedicated an entire book arguing for “Elgar the modernist”⁸, yet it may seem absurd to assign the same label to this composer as to Boulez, Birtwistle and Stockhausen. MacMillan describes himself as a modernist, even though his central ethos is to establish rather than sever links with the past. He argues his case as a modernist by criticising the narrow definition of modernism in music, which refers only to the atonal and the esoteric. Rather than accepting the label of postmodernist, MacMillan demands a respect for plurality and eclecticism within modernism, which embraces not only Boulez and Stockhausen, but also Adams, Turnage, Adès, and many others.

It was in 1988 with the work *Búsqueda* that this change in MacMillan’s perception of modernism occurred. It should be stressed that this was both a conceptual and a stylistic shift. Before 1988,

⁶ Carvin & Cody, 1993: <<http://www.paristransatlantic.com/magazine/interviews/boulez.html>>

⁷ In conversation with the composer, 11.2.11

⁸ Harper-Scott, J.P.E. 2006. *Edward Elgar, Modernist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MacMillan was writing 'high modernist' works and simple, folk-like, diatonic pieces: in 1985, for example, he wrote both his bleak and consistently dissonant Piano Sonata and his extremely successful congregational mass setting, *St Anne's Mass*. After 1988, these two musical styles fused together, producing the quintessentially MacMillanesque style heard in the majority of his works. However, this is not to imply that his folk and high modernist styles have not continued in their 'pure' form in post-*Búsqueda* works, for just as MacMillan has continued to write simple congregational music and folk-like part-songs throughout his career, high modernist works, though relatively infrequent, are to be found in his music from each decade since the 1980s. Indeed, arguably the most extreme of his modernist works came not from the 1980s, but from 2002: *A Deep but Dazzling Darkness*. Nevertheless, *Búsqueda* remains a work of tremendous importance, since it was in this work that these musical styles, as well as religious and political elements, were amalgamated for the very first time.

Overview

The first part of the study opens with a chapter examining MacMillan as a political composer, past and present, situating him within the context of the political extremes of Autonomy and Agitprop. With reference to the latter he is compared in particular to Louis Andriessen, a key influence on the young MacMillan, while Stravinsky and Schoenberg are more subtly referred to as representatives of the autonomous aesthetic of *l'art pour l'art*, devoid of any overt political agenda. Whereas Andriessen uses music as a vehicle with which to raise social and political awareness, Stravinsky and Schoenberg condemned this practice. As both a young and middle-aged composer, MacMillan demonstrates sympathies with both of these artistic stances, though his political views have changed considerably since his youth, and subsequently his music has been far less politically-driven since 2000.

After this brief opening discussion, which introduces MacMillan as a political composer in relatively general terms, the remainder of Chapter One focuses more specifically on the composer's early political concerns, namely his involvement with and abandonment of Marxism and Liberation Theology. This is one of the most important themes of the present study, and has repercussions for all three of the traditions mentioned above: for example, MacMillan's perceived tension between Marxism and the past recurs in Part II, concerning Catholic liturgies and the Second Vatican Council; and it also appears in the conclusion, with regard to MacMillan's attack on Boulez in his *Music and Modernity* speech. His attitude towards Marxism therefore permeates the entire thesis, and is integral to the topic of 'retrospective modernism'. Although founded in a theory of history, MacMillan (erroneously perhaps) equates Marxism with a revolutionary approach that expunges the past, and has frequently referred to his own, antithetical compulsion to tap into the 'deep reservoir of history'.

Following his interaction with Liberation Theology comes Chapter Two, which is solely dedicated to MacMillan's complicated relationship with Scotland. This is arguably the most explicit example of his cultural retrospective modernism, fuelled by the hope/belief that social problems in modern-day Scotland can be helped by re-examining its history. 'Scotland's Shame' was undoubtedly the most effective and provocative of all MacMillan's speeches, causing much controversy throughout the country. After the speech itself and the various issues surrounding sectarianism between Catholics and Protestants in Scotland has been addressed, the musical works associated with this national turmoil are examined. These distinctly Scottish-themed works comprise pieces as early as 1985 (Piano Sonata), followed by *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* (1990), *Sinfonietta* (1991), and a pair of closely connected keyboard concertos: Piano Concerto No. 2 (1999; 2003) and *A Scotch Bestiary* (2003-4). It is here that the influence of the three composers mentioned in Chapter One (Andriessen, Stravinsky

and Schoenberg) is made apparent, demonstrating MacMillan's musical retrospection to modernists from both ends of the twentieth century.

While Part I includes both religious and political issues with a dominating focus on the latter, Part II inverts this twofold focus, concentrating on some of the main religious issues within MacMillan's music by considering several of his large-scale works in relation to the music of Wagner and Bach. One of the most important themes relating to MacMillan's musical retrospective modernism is the practice of self-quotation and the quotation of earlier composers, and it is the music of Wagner and Bach that he has quoted most frequently.⁹ Significant though this may be, it is not the sole justification for selecting these composers. Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* has not only been prominently quoted by MacMillan in numerous works, but these references span a period of a quarter-century, implying that the work is of deep and enduring significance for the composer. Audibly recognisable citations from *The Ring* are also evident in several pieces, ranging from relatively recent works such as Symphony No. 3 'Silence' (*Das Rheingold*) and *A Scotch Bestiary* (*Die Walküre*), and dating as far back as 1982 with the string quartet *Etwas zurückhaltend* (*Götterdämmerung*), written as a student of John Casken at Durham University but only rediscovered by the composer and subsequently published in 2008.

Tristan und Isolde is the most frequently cited work in MacMillan's output, and according to which musical context each *Tristan* reference occurs, its meaning is transformed. The most significant of these contexts are *The Sacrifice* and *St John Passion*, where the erotic-sacrificial element of Wagner's music-drama is subjected to a theological interpretation, aided in no small part by Roger Scruton's *Death-devoted Heart: Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's Tristan and Isolde*, which MacMillan was reading while composing these two major works. In earlier works, *Tristan* was evoked by MacMillan to express a more secular, political concern, namely his dying love for Scotland.

⁹ Excluding quotations of plainchant and folksongs.

It is the theme of the Christian passion that leads into the next chapter, focusing on the sacred music of Bach. Bach is perhaps one of the most obvious composers of all with whom to compare MacMillan, given each composer's preoccupation with religious music. This manifests itself in three different ways, common to both composers: an emphasis on the events surrounding the Easter Triduum, and especially the Christian passion and crucifixion; the effect of liturgical reforms, writing for religious liturgies, with the inclusion of the congregational participation; and the self-recycling and self-parodying of earlier works.

In the second of these three topics, another significant influence on MacMillan is included in the discussion: Messiaen. Although Messiaen never wrote for congregations, or any work for the Good Friday liturgy, he is an important figure with regard to the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council, which also directly affected MacMillan. Both MacMillan and Messiaen turn to past, long-standing traditions, preferring these to the more liberal approach to liturgical practice, including music, that accompanied Vatican II. Yet MacMillan resembles Bach more in his willingness to integrate congregations into the music of the liturgy, as active performers as well as passive listeners, thus presenting the inner conflict of his religious retrospective modernism: between traditional liturgical practice and 'modern' congregational participation.

The final section of this 'Bach chapter' refers to one of the dominant themes of this thesis: musical recycling and self-quotation. Evidence for these distinct though related topics is found in abundance in MacMillan's music, and it is my claim that this process of quotation, previously scarcely noticed, lies at the heart of the composer's work. Recycling is defined closely with parodying, the re-use/re-working of an entire piece or a movement of a piece into a later work. It may relate to practical considerations, though not necessarily, and in comparing Bach's Mass in B minor with MacMillan's *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, both of which recycle musical material extensively, practical and artistic implications are revealed.

Due to the extent of MacMillan's self-quotations, references to this subject occur throughout Parts I and II. However, in Part III the practice of musical quotation is discussed as a topic in its own right, particularly with relation to polystylism. This is emphasised by drawing a comparison with the self-quotations of Mahler, a composer known for this technique. Having explored self-quotation in works by MacMillan and Mahler, this chapter concludes with a case study, comparing two recurring themes, used by the composers in numerous works spanning a wide period of time: Mahler's repeated quotation of Wagner's 'Ewigkeit' motive from the *Ring*; and MacMillan's even more frequent self-quotation of his early folk-style ballad, *The Tryst*.

By examining Mahler's quotation of Wagner (rather than self-quotation) at the end of Chapter Five, this concluding case study provides an appropriate segue into the related topic of musical quotation from other composers in Chapter Six, which situates Mahler as the first polystylist. This initial section is succeeded by discussion of four other major polystylists, all of whom MacMillan has mentioned at various stages throughout his career, including the stylistic juxtapositions found in the music of Ives, in contrast to the relatively synthesised approach to disparate elements in Mahler. Ives is then followed by Berio, whose interest in folk music made a profound impact upon MacMillan, and whose *Laborintus II* inspired MacMillan's companion piece, *Búsqueda*, the first work in which the composer fused art music, folk music, religion and political issues together and therefore a milestone in his compositional development. Succeeding Berio is Schnittke, who MacMillan has frequently mentioned in admiration, and with whom he shares a common religious faith, and finally Maxwell Davies, who has acted in some ways as a remote mentor to MacMillan, and who shares MacMillan's love of Scottish folk music and plainchant.

The final part of this study, comprising a substantial conclusion, follows directly from Part III, and is essentially a culmination of the preceding three parts. The opening of the Part IV-conclusion briefly

returns to the topic of MacMillan's relationship with Marxism. MacMillan's 2009 speech 'Music and Modernity' is explored, concerning the continuation of a musical tradition versus the modernist approach of certain composers to sever links from the past and begin from a 'year zero'. His principle target in this speech is Boulez. However, given Boulez's role as a conductor of past composers, this break with the past is not as absolute as MacMillan implies.

Following discussion of this speech, the remainder of the conclusion considers MacMillan's responses to various types of modernism, and the concepts 'high modernism', 'antimodernism', 'postmodernism', 'pluralist modernism' and finally 'retrospective modernism' are explored in detail. I argue that while all of these terms have resonances with various works by MacMillan, only 'retrospective modernist' provides a truly accurate description of the composer. MacMillan rejects neither modernism nor modernity, despite often writing music with 'traditional' or 'historical' forms and techniques, and despite being a devout Catholic within an increasingly secularised modern British society. His concerns are very much modern concerns, whether they are cultural, religious or musical, yet he argues each of these concerns is rooted in the past, and promotes the gradual processes of these three traditions. While Stockhausen's self-description as Janus-like with regard to the past and the future¹⁰ may be questioned, this model accurately describes MacMillan's attitude, which respects tradition as much as the progress of modernism.

It should be noted that while the three traditions discussed here – cultural/political, religious, musical – are organised into three parts, with each of the first three parts dedicated to one of the three traditions, there are inevitable overlaps across these traditions, and subsequently across the four-part structure of this study: while musical self-quotation is explored specifically and extensively in Part III, instances of this practice are found throughout; religion dominates Part II, but has implications for the discussion of Liberation Theology and

¹⁰ Stockhausen in Tannenbaum, 1987: 2

sectarianism in Part I, as well as the discussion of modernism and postmodernism in the conclusion; Marxism is also a key topic in the discussion of Liberation Theology in Chapter One, but is at least briefly referred to with reference to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council in Part II, and with regard to Boulez and European modernism in the Part IV-conclusion. Such cross-fertilisation across these cultural-political/religious/musical traditions and across all four parts of this study is inevitable, and makes evident the intertwined characteristics of MacMillan's retrospective modernism.

Part I: Cultural Retrospective Modernism: Marxism, Sectarianism and Nationalism

Chapter 1. Defining MacMillan as ‘Political Composer’

Religion and Politics, Autonomy and Adaptation

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, MacMillan was often referred to as a ‘political composer’ due to the overt political subjects of his music. While religious themes continue to dominate the vast majority of his works to this day, MacMillan has written far fewer politically-themed works since the late 1990s. Indeed, the composer now claims to be ‘apolitical’¹, and in a controversial article written in 2008, he insisted that he should no longer be described as a ‘liberal left-winger’.² This significant change of political status warrants attention and is discussed in this chapter, specifically with reference to the composer’s associations with Liberation Theology.

Before exploring this important episode from his past, which has significant implications for MacMillan’s retrospective modernism, it is worth considering where (politically speaking) the composer now stands, and how he came to this political viewpoint. In his youth, the Left and especially Marxist ideals permeated MacMillan’s social perspective and music up to 1992, with the percussion concerto *Veni, veni Emmanuel*. It was about this time that MacMillan became particularly interested in certain techniques employed by other Marxist musicians, most notably Louis Andriessen. Written in celebration of the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, MacMillan’s politically-charged *Sowetan Spring* (1990) borrows an ancient technique made prominent by Andriessen’s treatment: hocketing. The thirty-one year old MacMillan himself reveals: “I have for many years been fascinated by the music of the Dutch composer Louis Andriessen and especially by his handling of antiphonal hocketing effects. So much so that I have been

¹ In interview with the composer, 21.2.08.

² MacMillan, *The Spectator*, 30.1.08.

tempted into writing a hocket of my own on a number of occasions".³ *Sowetan Spring* is one such work, making frequent use of the hocketing technique between groups of instruments throughout its duration.

However, while the young MacMillan respected composers like Andriessen, a number of contradictions arise regarding the relationship between politics and music. These contradictions concern both the young MacMillan and MacMillan as a middle-aged composer. For example, while his admiration of Andriessen dates from the early 1990s, in 1992 MacMillan expressed a quasi-Stravinskian stance to music, stating that a composer needs to be divorced from everything religious, political and moral.⁴ In 2000, he was still wary but less dogmatic about the relationship between music and politics, claiming there are always dangers in expressing a religious or political point of view in music,⁵ and by 2008, he laughed when the 1992 article was repeated to him, and said the complete opposite was now true:

I think perhaps I didn't want to be branded with a particular status (e.g. 'political composer' or 'religious composer'). The Catholic aspect brought a negative twist to people's comments about my music, so to this extent I was right not to make my faith public early in my career. But now I just don't care about that kind of hostility anymore: I've developed a very thick skin over the years.⁶

Yet in the very same year he made the above statement, MacMillan confirmed his comment from 1992, regarding his support for the autonomy of music, which should not be diluted with ulterior motives: "I don't want my music to become a vehicle for propaganda in the way it has for Steve Martland or Louis Andriessen. I think that once it becomes this, it immediately diminishes the art-form, which should exist in its own right, not as a tool for an alternative cause."⁷ MacMillan therefore presents a somewhat contradictory attitude towards the relationship between extramusical causes and the arts: he argues that music should

³ MacMillan, 1990 <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Sowetan-Spring/2892>>

⁴ MacMillan, quoted in Fisher, 1992: 28.

⁵ MacMillan, 2000: 10.

⁶ In interview with the composer, 21.2.08.

⁷ In interview with the composer, 1.2.08.

not be hijacked for political agendas, yet he has written religious works throughout his career, and many of his earlier works are politically themed.

Unlike Andriessen, MacMillan's early preoccupation with Marxism did not dominate his music for long, and his (MacMillan's) perception of the political Left in general changed considerably between 1990 and 2010. His music is largely no longer concerned with political subjects, and approaching his fiftieth birthday in 2009, the composer frequently mentioned "losing the political ideals of his youth."⁸ This break from the Left seems to have particularly affected MacMillan in artistic circles. In his 1999 speech, 'Scotland's Shame', he describes the arts as a safe 'arena' - the one place where he had never encountered the visceral anti-Catholicism so prominent in all other walks of Scottish society.⁹ Nine years later, this admiration was withdrawn entirely, with the composer stating that his revulsion of anti-Catholic behaviour is particularly acute in the arts: "This has its roots in Romanticism, of course, but a gradual systemisation of radical politics settled in the early 20th century... any old revolution would do, but as long as it overturned manners and lifestyles as well as aesthetics and politics".¹⁰ His despair therefore lies in the Left - a political stance that he used to adhere to but from which he has retreated, due to his religious beliefs and his questioning of contemporary morals.

In 2008, MacMillan admitted that while Andriessen's approach may provide an appropriate model for other composers, it is foreign to him: "it obviously works, since his music would be of a very different kind of music if it did not have its Marxist roots. But that amount of political consumption remains a closed book to me".¹¹ In the same interview, MacMillan continued to stress that he not only found this degree of political consumption too much, but that he was now reluctant to write any kind of political music himself:

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ MacMillan, 2000: 14.

¹⁰ MacMillan, *The Spectator*, 30.1.08.

¹¹ MacMillan, via email, 16.4.08.

I'm more and more uncomfortable about dealing with political issues in relation to my own work... Maybe the politics is just being slowly sifted out. This isn't happening in a vacuum, however. Simultaneously, a lot of my recent music is becoming more abstract, especially the chamber music - the Horn Quintet, the Third String Quartet etc.¹²

The comment that 'a lot' of his music written around the time he made the above statement is becoming more abstract is a significant exaggeration. Appendix A lists all of MacMillan's published works, and shows that in 2007 the Horn Quintet and String Quartet No. 3 were in fact the only abstract works written in this year. In the previous year, 2006, there is not a single example of a work with an entirely abstract title. MacMillan is right in claiming that political elements are far less frequent, compared to his earlier works from the 1980s and 1990s, but these have been replaced by an increase in religious connotations rather than abstract works.

While he undoubtedly opposes agitprop music, MacMillan is far more willing to adapt his compositional style for religious means, such as simple congregational music.¹³ Compromising his musical style for this purpose might itself be interpreted as a socialist attitude. It is perhaps for this reason that MacMillan is far more accepting of Arvo Pärt's *Credo* than the purely political music of Andriessen. In direct opposition to Andriessen's Marxism, Pärt's *Credo* of 1968 defiantly challenged the communist regime that dominated his homeland Estonia at the time, most explicitly with its text "I believe in Jesus Christ" – an unmistakable expression of Pärt's Christianity. MacMillan considers this a brave and important work ("it packed a powerful punch")¹⁴ and insisted that it should be part of the programming of the 2008 RTÉ festival, of which he was Artistic Director. This seems to contradict his opinion against composers such as Andriessen using music as a political

¹² Ibid.

¹³ This topic is explored in detail in Chapter Four, in conjunction with Bach's music for congregational participation.

¹⁴ In conversation with the composer, 21.2.08.

vehicle. Having had this pointed out to him, MacMillan replied that there are certain circumstances where such political expression through music is appropriate, especially where the circumstances were as oppressive as in Pärt's case, but this should not be the impetus for the entirety of the composer's output.¹⁵

Given its chronological and geographical context, the political (as well as religious) statement in Pärt's *Credo* is evident, but the fact that it is essentially a religious work surely affected MacMillan's response to it. Schoenberg, on the other hand, insisted that music should be compromised for neither political nor religious motivations, arguing that "if it is art, it is not for all, and if it is for all, it is not art".¹⁶ What he finds most deplorable in this regard is the acting of some artists who "arrogantly wish to make believe that they descend from their heights in order to give some of their riches to the masses" though he admits there are several composers (such as Offenbach, Johann Strauss and Gershwin), whose feelings actually coincide with those of the "average man in the street."¹⁷

It is difficult to apply this to MacMillan's music, since on a superficial level he seems guilty of the arrogance Schoenberg mentions, especially in his congregational works. However, such 'accessible' music is written to satisfy not a desire for popularity but a practical need: if congregations are to sing, the music must be singable. Beyond this liturgical concern, MacMillan also stresses that as class barriers are beginning to disappear, there should be "some evangelical work done for music".¹⁸ Unlike Schoenberg, MacMillan thinks there needs to be a social role for the composer: "Most composers are very shy... I am also very shy, but I have been able to overcome that because of the necessity to evangelise on behalf of music, both the western tradition and contemporary music".¹⁹ This is one of the very few occasions where

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Schoenberg (1946), 1975: 123-4.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ MacMillan in Astley, Hone and Savage, 2000: 12.

¹⁹ Ibid.

MacMillan uses the term 'evangelise'. He is keen to promote contemporary music, but is wary of mentioning evangelising in the context of sacred music. Andriessen and MacMillan both reject claims of being evangelists. In each case, the composer writes for a specific performer, who is inextricably connected with a specific context: either workers or members of politically-minded instrumental groups such as Orkest De Volharding (Andriessen), or congregations (MacMillan). It is these performers – i.e. 'the converted' – for whom such music is written.²⁰

To this extent, although MacMillan's focus may have shifted emphasis from the political to the religious, he nevertheless resembles Andriessen. While MacMillan may verbally express greater support for the autonomous nature of music than Andriessen, both composers adapt their music for causes they believe in: Marxism and Catholicism. However, several decades before the political elements were 'sifted out' from MacMillan's music, at about the turn of the twenty-first century, these two political and religious systems – Marxism and Catholicism – came together in a movement that affected the composer significantly. Indeed, MacMillan's involvement with this movement influenced many of his major works from the period 1988-1992. This movement began to develop during MacMillan's youth, and eventually became known as Liberation Theology.

Communism in the name of Christianity: Liberation Theology

In the second half of the twentieth century Liberation Theology enjoyed a significant popularity, achieving prominence in the 1970s and 1980s. Originating in Latin America, it considered the Christian faith with reference to the suffering of the poor and the oppressed, their struggle and hope, and offered a critique of society and Christianity, especially the Catholic Church. The movement attempted to fuse the Marxist

²⁰ A more detailed account of this topic is included in Appendix L, where MacMillan is considered alongside Andriessen and Eisler (representing 'agitprop' music), and Stravinsky and Schoenberg (representing the autonomy of music).

ideals of human and economic equality with Catholicism, interpreting sections of the Bible from a revolutionary perspective in order to fight social injustice and poverty. MacMillan became involved with the movement in the 1980s, having been a member of the Junior Marxist League as a teenager. While a member of this group he continued to practice the Catholic faith in which he had been brought up. Given these two early influences, as well as the popularity of the movement in the 1980s, it was perhaps inevitable that he should be drawn to Liberation Theology, and MacMillan was especially attracted to the poetry of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina. He incorporated poems by these women into several Liberation Theology works, interspersing them with liturgical texts. This represents the earliest example of retrospective modernism in MacMillan's music – in this case, a mixture of religious and cultural retrospective modernism - where present-day conflicts are compared with biblical events, and where modern and ancient literary sources are placed alongside one another and set to music. Liberation Theology looks back to texts that are centuries old, and re-interprets them in a way that is relevant to modern social problems. To this extent, it is fundamental in defining MacMillan as a retrospective modernist.

The following discussion initially concerns three of MacMillan's early works: *Búsqueda* (1988); *Cantos Sagrados* (1989); and *Catherine's Lullabies* (1990). However, the works themselves are not explored at length. Instead, they provide an introduction into MacMillan's complicated relationship with the Marxist-Catholic principles of Liberation Theology over the past three decades, culminating with the composer's disassociation from the movement.

Although his political interests were expressed musically as early as 1984 with *Songs of a Just War*²¹, MacMillan's most concentrated Liberation Theology period lies between 1988 and 1990, comprising

²¹ This cycle of three songs is an unpublished work, composed as one of the eight works MacMillan submitted as part of his composition PhD at Durham University. The middle song of this cycle, *The Children*, was subsequently extracted and arranged by the composer for voice and piano.

four works, three of which contain text.²² The textual source for two of these works was the poetry of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, a group of women in Argentina who formed in the early 1980s, in response to the numerous cases of *desaparecidos* (“the disappeared”), a consequence of the ‘Dirty War’ in Argentina, 1976-1983. The 1984 findings of the *Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (National Commission of Disappeared Persons, or CONADEP) created by President Raúl Alfonsín, found the military guilty and condemned many of its members to prison.²³ All of the executions carried out by the military junta were clandestine, with bodies hidden, burned, buried in unmarked graves, or cast into the sea weighed with cement blocks, after the victim was sedated with an injection.²⁴ In this way, there were no dead, only the ‘disappeared’, hence the reason why the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo are often referred to as the ‘Mothers of the Disappeared’.

Búsqueda was the first of MacMillan’s works to incorporate poems written by members of this group, and it arguably marks the most significant step in MacMillan’s compositional development. The various musical and extramusical strands that permeate so much of his work were previously evident, including ‘art’ music, folk music, religion and politics, but each category was isolated in individual works. *Búsqueda* represents the first instance of the compartmental disintegration that was to facilitate the style MacMillan has become typically known for. The composer clearly agrees with the Mothers of the Disappeared that artistic expression – be it through poetry or music – is an important part of the healing process after an atrocity. Taylor explains that even without artistic expression, the victims re-emerged as icons, either as “subversives” (for the military government) or as the

²² *The Exorcism of Rio Sumpul*, a purely orchestral, three-movement work, recalls a helicopter attack in El Salvador. Although the first major massacre that took place here on 14th May 1980 claimed the lives of hundreds of peasants – including women and children – MacMillan’s piece focuses on one specific attack from which, incredibly, nobody was killed.

²³ See Romero, Luis Alberto. 2002. *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*. Trans. James P. Brennan. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press: 216.

²⁴ Romero, 2002: 218.

“disappeared” (for the Madres and other human rights activists) – powerful images that reintroduced the missing into the public sphere.²⁵

It is this topic that permeates *Búsqueda*, a thirty-minute music theatre work, though the piece takes its structure from the Catholic Mass, comprising excerpts taken from the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus and Agnus Dei. These are not so much sections as points of punctuation throughout work’s continuous, single movement, and they act as both a textual and musical backdrop for the work, with MacMillan incorporating instances of plainchant associated with these sections of the mass. However the text is essentially dominated by the poems of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, translated into English by Gilbert Markus OP and several other members of the organization *Búsqueda* (Search), Oxford, hence the name of the piece.

Although MacMillan draws a connection between political struggle and religion by inserting liturgical references in Latin, the poems themselves are already imbued with this fusion. An examination of the Credo reveals several long, consecutive *senza misura* bars from bar 235, beginning with part of the Credo (“Et incarnatus est de spiritu sancto ex Maria Virgine et homo factus est”), which is then repeated among the eight actors but interspersed with a section from one of the Mothers’ poems: “You are with me, my son, it is not dates nor times that are sad: sad is your life – broken now – *et homo factus est* - Sad is my mother’s heart – impotent now, reliving the suffering of Jesus and Mary - *et incarnates est de spiritu sancto* – etc.” Thus, the Mothers themselves draw the Christian connection, and MacMillan merely accentuates this central theme of a mother’s grief for her lost son.

The following year MacMillan composed the even more impassioned *Cantos Sagrados*, a choral work with organ or string orchestra accompaniment, comprising three contrasting movements. It opens by continuing the prevailing subject of *Búsqueda*: a search for bodies. The texts of the first and third movements are by the political activist, playwright and poet, Ariel Dorfman. MacMillan expresses the

²⁵ Taylor, 1997: 140.

frantic nature of the search and sheer desperation of the mission by dividing the voices into various groups, creating an atmosphere in which information is gradually disseminated throughout the choir. This emphasises the chaotic environment of the poem, where some ask questions, some try to answer them, and others shout that they cannot hear the information for all the frenzied commotion.

The second movement is by stark contrast a calm, mantra-like prayer to the Virgin of Guadalupe, with a text written by Ana Maria Mendoza, an enigmatic figure who was involved with human rights groups in Mexico. Finally, the third movement blends these aspects together, incorporating a poem which describes the brief interaction between a soldier and a person to be executed. The soldier whispers “forgive me, companero”, asking forgiveness from the man he is about to kill, at which point the condemned man’s body fills with such an extreme light that he scarcely hears the sounds of the shots. Following the poem MacMillan inserts the Latin text of the Crucifixus: “Crucifixus etiam pro nobis” (“he was crucified for us”), laced with increasingly faint interjections of “forgive me, companero”. Just as with *Búsqueda’s* Jesus-Mary parallel, the connection between the victim’s execution and Christ’s crucifixion is made explicitly clear, and the fact that the soldier begs forgiveness of the condemned reveals a vibrant glimmer of hope that the political turmoil cannot continue for much longer.

The most recent of the three, choral, Liberation Theology works is also the most obscure, not least because it has received no commercial recording, it is seldom performed, and at the time of writing, even the sheet music could not be purchased. Scored for SATB chorus, brass and percussion, *Catherine’s Lullabies* offers a rather misleading title, for this twenty-minute, single-movement work possesses a very different character to the sentimentality usually associated with a set of lullabies. MacMillan wrote the piece when first daughter, Catherine, was born, explaining that the point of the work was not to wallow in a cosy domesticity but to use and share the

subjective experience of parenthood as a focus for more universal human truths.²⁶

The work includes religious texts which focus specifically on helping the needy and oppressed, taken from Isaiah 61, Ecclesiasticus 4, and the Magnificat. The composer himself admits that while some of these texts were chosen because of their statement of faith and commitment, others were included because of their strong revolutionary message – a message of social justice and equality, intrinsic to the ‘politics of the gospel’: “they are manifestos of spiritual and social liberation. Therefore, they are the finest lullabies for our children – effective endearments, seeds of hope and freedom to blossom in the future”.²⁷ *Catherine’s Lullabies* uses a poem by just one member of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, which formed the starting point for the piece. In his programme note to the work, MacMillan reveals his admiration for the poem’s ability to express “a sense of perpetual hope and mercy even in the light of their children being taken away and destroyed by the military regime.”²⁸

These three Liberation Theology works have significant implications for some of MacMillan’s later pieces: the structure of *Cantos Sagrados*, comprising three movements, which each have an English text and conclude with a Latin, sacred text, is emulated in the ten movements of *St John Passion* (2007); the audible breathing in and out that opens and concludes *Búsqueda* is clearly evident at the conclusion of the fourth movement of *Sun-Dogs* (2006); and musical material from *Catherine’s Lullabies* is recycled in the second movement and conclusion of *The Berserking* (1990) and *Angel* (1993). These three Liberation Theology works also act as a clear and early sign of MacMillan’s retrospective modernism from a religio-cultural perspective, establishing a strong connection between the biblical past and the then present political climate in Latin America.

²⁶ MacMillan, 1990: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Catherine-s-Lullabies/5648>>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

In addition to these pieces of 1988-1990, which refer specifically to the political turmoil of Latin America during and after the Dirty War, there is one further work from about this time which also relates to the theme of liberation: *Veni, Veni Emmanuel* (1992). This percussion concerto has become one of MacMillan's most popular and frequently performed works, arguably due to the variety of interpretations it offers: it contains no text, and therefore the extramusical element (in this case religious/political) is not as prominent as in the aforementioned choral works, allowing listeners to easily appreciate the music for its own sake; the titles of the movements chart the journey from Advent to Easter, providing a sense of chronology in parallel with the Church calendar for listeners who are aware of this; and the text of the eponymous fifteenth-century French Advent plainchant upon which the entire work is based has clear political resonances: "O come, o come Emmanuel, redeem thy captive Israel".

However, this is not the only text associated with the work, as the composer explains in his programme note: "Advent texts proclaim the promised day of liberation from fear, anguish and oppression, and this work is an attempt to mirror that in music, finding its initial inspiration in the Gospel according to St Luke, Ch. 21." It is clear to see why this chapter in particular appealed to MacMillan, given its political content:

But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. (Luke 21: 12)

You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death (Luke 21: 16)

When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21: 20-24)

The concerto therefore refers to two instances of biblical oppression, between Jews and Gentiles in general (Luke 21), and the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt (the Book of Exodus), referred to (though without its text) in the plainchant dominating each of the work's variations. Given this dual reference to liberation from oppression, the concerto should be considered in conjunction with MacMillan's other Liberation Theology works, even though its subject matter is less specific than some of these other pieces by not including poetry of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo.

Although *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel* may therefore reasonably be considered as the last of the MacMillan's Liberation Theology works, traces are vaguely evident in some of his later pieces, such as Symphony No. 3 'Silence' (2003), a musical response to Japanese author Shusaku Endo's novel about Christian missionaries in seventeenth-century Japan, *Silence*. The 'silence' referred to here concerns the relationship between God and man, particularly at times of great physical and psychological hardship, as outlined by Endo in his novel. However, MacMillan himself, while appreciating the relationship to Liberation Theology, does not consider the symphony as a "Liberation Theology work"²⁹, and this is supported by the fact that after 1992 his music expresses a clear retreat from this political area.

Retreating from Liberation Theology and Marxism

MacMillan's involvement with and disassociation from Liberation Theology essentially parallels the alternating attitude of the Catholic Church. There existed an extremely complex relationship between the Church and the various, contrasting political groups and ideologies circulating in Argentina between the early 1960s and the rise of the Radical government in the late 1980s. Although the relationship is far

²⁹ MacMillan, via email: 13.1.08

too detailed to discuss fully here, it is necessary to provide at least a rough outline in order explain the Church's oscillating involvement with Liberation Theology and MacMillan's subsequent rejection of the movement.

Pope John XXIII initiated support of what was soon to become known as 'Liberation Theology'. This ideological shift in the church expressed itself officially in three encyclicals. The first was in 1961 with *Mater et Magister*, which warned of a new kind of global imperialism by which wealthy capitalist nations were forcing the rest of the world into dependency. Two years later, *Pacem in Terris* called upon Christians to involve themselves in the struggle for social justice and to collaborate with social reformers, even Marxists.³⁰ Finally in 1967 came *Populorum Progressio*, which expressed sympathy with the violent upheavals in the Third World and called for fundamental changes in the world economy.

In Argentina in the 1970s however, this collaboration with Marxist groups was not accepted, for communism was seen as the enemy of Christianity. Colonel Horacio E. Querol, who claimed the modern world's troubles began with the individualism engendered by the Protestant Reformation, blamed the Argentine educational system for "failing to teach the principles that God is the essence of truth and that the truth about God is to be found in the eternal church He created: the Roman Catholic Church".³¹ Colonel Querol was by no means an isolated example of this mentality. In the *Revista del Circulo Militar*, a prestigious military publication in Argentina, articles appeared throughout the 1960s arguing that Christianity was the only effective antidote to communism, Protestantism caused decadence and anarchy, and liberalism inevitably led to Marxism-Leninism.³²

During the turbulent period of the *proceso*, the military-led regime that utilized extreme and violent force to maintain order, the

³⁰ Lewis, Paul H. 2002. *Guerrillas and Generals: The "Dirty War" in Argentina*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group: 27.

³¹ Lewis, 2002: 142.

³² Ibid.

Church's stance remained far from monolithic, not least because anyone linked to subversion of the regime soon 'disappeared'. Some Argentine priests and bishops were actually sympathetic to the *proceso*'s 'Dirty War', assuring journalists that many of the so-called *desaparecidos* were actually living in Europe; but others strongly opposed the regime and suffered as a result, including Monsenor Enrique Angelelli, who was killed in a staged car accident on 4th August 1976.³³

The Church's association with Liberation Theology under pope John Paul II (1978-2005) was similarly contradictory. In 1979 a group of bishops established a social pastoral team to rebuild the link. In 1981, the Church issued *The Catholic Church and the National Community*, which reaffirmed republican principles and indicated the Church's preference for democracy, its distancing itself from the military regime, and its sympathies for society's rising demands.³⁴

However, several years later the Vatican issued the deeply critical 'Some Aspects of Liberation Theology'³⁵ in 1984 and 1986, after which Liberation Theology soon faded. The secularization that accompanied the rise of democracy was incompatible with many of the Church's teachings. Perhaps the most explicit of these incompatibilities occurred in 1987, with the legalization of divorce. It is ironic that in its attempts to act out the message of the Gospel to promote equality of wealth, an ideal that also lies at the very heart of Marx's communism, the Church facilitated a secularized society. The conservative sectors of the Church in Argentina became despondent: democracy, they said, had turned out to be a compendium of all the century's evils – drugs, terrorism, abortion, and pornography.³⁶ Supporters of Liberation Theology therefore faced two paths: one which was essentially political and secular; and one which continued to sympathise with political

³³ Lewis, 2002: 185.

³⁴ Romero, 2002: 258.

³⁵ This was issued with the authority of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the 'Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith', who later became Pope Benedict XVI.

³⁶ Romero, 2002: 259.

injustice while adhering to the Church's teachings. MacMillan, a devout Catholic, chose the latter.

Just as MacMillan expressed strong concerns that music should not be employed for political aims, as in the case of Eisler and Andriessen, many critics leveled a similar charge against Liberation Theology: the Santa Fe Committee accused liberation theologians of using the church "as a political weapon against private property and productive capitalism by infiltrating the religious community with ideas that are less Christian than Communist".³⁷ One of the most significant challenges to the movement came from Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, then auxiliary bishop of Medellin and secretary of CELAM.³⁸ Trujillo charged that Liberation Theology was unduly influenced by Marxist thinking, and that identifying the poor of the Gospels with Marx's proletariat would only encourage the class war.³⁹ This criticism was compounded by papal criticisms. Pope John Paul II had seen the bankruptcy of Marxism and in his native Poland, and this inevitably swayed his perception of the movement, to the extent that during his visit to the CELAM conference in Puebla, Mexico in 1979, he declared roundly that "the idea of Christ as a political figure, a revolutionary, as the subversive man from Nazareth, does not tally with the Church's catechesis".⁴⁰

However, this should not be interpreted simplistically as a complete rejection of the movement. Hebblethwaite claims that it was assumed *either* that the Pope would endorse the 'conservative' line *or* that he would endorse the 'liberation' and 'progressive' line, whereas he ended up doing neither, offering instead an alternative form of the theology of liberation. Hebblethwaite explains two consequences of this alternative approach: first, Liberation Theology, as developed in Latin America, was critically scrutinized and found gravely wanting; second,

³⁷ Berryman, 1987: 4.

³⁸ CELAM: Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (Latin American Episcopal Conference).

³⁹ Hebblethwaite, 1999: 181.

⁴⁰ Hebblethwaite, 1999: 182.

the concern for social justice expressed by Liberation Theology was validated and confirmed.⁴¹

This mid-way ground clearly made an impact on MacMillan, who was already beginning to have doubts about Liberation Theology, and particularly its connection with Marxist principles: “The papal criticisms probably affected me, but I was beginning to realise for myself that Liberation Theology was too close politically to Marxism, and apparently incapable of offering a critique of the materialism at the core of secular politics”.⁴² Such claims have been supported by numerous Liberation Theology authors, and with justification. José Miguez Bonino’s *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* is criticized by Sigmund for exactly the same reasons MacMillan expressed in the above quotation. Sigmund claims that Bonino’s book is influenced almost entirely by Marxist sociology, and almost no theology.⁴³ Examining Bonino’s book itself, such a claim is far from inaccurate. Although he stresses that Marxist dogmatism is to be avoided, he also argues that Marxism offers “scientific analysis and a number for verifiable hypotheses.”⁴⁴ Bonino describes it as the “best possible instrument available for an effective and rational realization of human possibilities in historical life.”⁴⁵ This mentality continues throughout the book: liberation has obliterated theology.

As the movement fell into increasing decline, responses to Liberation Theology varied. Petrella categorises these more recent responses into three groups: ‘reasserting core ideas’, ‘reformulating or revising basic categories’, and ‘critiquing idolatry’, whether of the market or of modernity at large.⁴⁶ MacMillan undoubtedly falls into the first of these categories, which Petrella describes as the position which “disentangles Liberation Theology’s core ideas – concepts such as the preferential option for the poor, the reign of God and liberation – from

⁴¹ Hebblethwaite, 1999: 182-3.

⁴² MacMillan, via email, 25.5.08.

⁴³ Sigmund, 1990: 53.

⁴⁴ Bonino, 1975: 85.

⁴⁵ Bonino, 1975: 97.

⁴⁶ Petrella, 2004: 2-11.

Marxism as a social scientific mediation, and socialism as a historical project.”⁴⁷ In other words, it is possible to distinguish the essential truths of Liberation Theology from their Marxist context. MacMillan agrees with such a distinction, claiming that Christianity does not need the guidance of the secular left when it comes to gospel values: “Catholics have been duped on this and should strive to rediscover the original Christocentric reason for loving the poor and dispossessed, which has nothing to do with Marx.”⁴⁸

However much his political stance may have altered since his youth, MacMillan has always respected papal authority. This has been a constant throughout his life, and is demonstrated musically in works such as *Invocation*, a musical setting of a poem written by John Paul II, and *Mass for Blessed Henry John Newman*, written for Benedict XVI’s visit to Britain in September 2010. It was only with papal authorisation that MacMillan encouraged and developed his Marxist tendencies, and as this sanctioning gave way to criticism, he followed the Church. In conversation with the composer in 2010, he said he considered his support of Liberation Theology to be ‘an understandable misreading of the times’ and that he now thinks of himself as a ‘moral conservative’ rather than a left-wing socialist.⁴⁹ From both his music and his speeches, such a self-assessment seems accurate: the communist-inflected Christianity of his formative years has been replaced by a fervent advocacy of the Catholic Church, and he now refers to the group he was once a member of as a means of attacking political and musical figures in speeches.

Although MacMillan rejected Liberation Theology, one aspect from the movement that remained with him was a sense of understanding the importance of the relationship between past and present. Indeed, it was because of this that he eventually rejected the movement, as it became less concerned with the traditions of the Church, and focused solely on modernisation and secularisation. For

⁴⁷ Petrella, 2004: 3.

⁴⁸ MacMillan, via email, 25.5.08.

⁴⁹ In conversation with the composer, 3.5.10.

MacMillan, tradition could simply be ignored, and must always inform the present. As definitions of the Left developed, MacMillan broke away, becoming a political and moral conservative. The central concept of Liberation Theology - namely the idealistic relationship between tradition and the modern - failed in practice, but MacMillan persisted with this ideal on his own terms, using it to influence all his subsequent works. The next chapter examines how MacMillan took this concept – the essence of what I call his ‘retrospective modernism’⁵⁰ - and applied it to his own country, Scotland.

⁵⁰ The composer has never mentioned this term.

Part I: Cultural Retrospective Modernism: Marxism, Sectarianism and Nationalism

Chapter 1. Defining MacMillan as ‘Political Composer’

Religion and Politics, Autonomy and Adaptation

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, MacMillan was often referred to as a ‘political composer’ due to the overt political subjects of his music. While religious themes continue to dominate the vast majority of his works to this day, MacMillan has written far fewer politically-themed works since the late 1990s. Indeed, the composer now claims to be ‘apolitical’¹, and in a controversial article written in 2008, he insisted that he should no longer be described as a ‘liberal left-winger’.² This significant change of political status warrants attention and is discussed in this chapter, specifically with reference to the composer’s associations with Liberation Theology.

Before exploring this important episode from his past, which has significant implications for MacMillan’s retrospective modernism, it is worth considering where (politically speaking) the composer now stands, and how he came to this political viewpoint. In his youth, the Left and especially Marxist ideals permeated MacMillan’s social perspective and music up to 1992, with the percussion concerto *Veni, veni Emmanuel*. It was about this time that MacMillan became particularly interested in certain techniques employed by other Marxist musicians, most notably Louis Andriessen. Written in celebration of the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, MacMillan’s politically-charged *Sowetan Spring* (1990) borrows an ancient technique made prominent by Andriessen’s treatment: hocketing. The thirty-one year old MacMillan himself reveals: “I have for many years been fascinated by the music of the Dutch composer Louis Andriessen and especially by his handling of antiphonal hocketing effects. So much so that I have been

¹ In interview with the composer, 21.2.08.

² MacMillan, *The Spectator*, 30.1.08.

tempted into writing a hocket of my own on a number of occasions”.³ *Sowetan Spring* is one such work, making frequent use of the hocketing technique between groups of instruments throughout its duration.

However, while the young MacMillan respected composers like Andriessen, a number of contradictions arise regarding the relationship between politics and music. These contradictions concern both the young MacMillan and MacMillan as a middle-aged composer. For example, while his admiration of Andriessen dates from the early 1990s, in 1992 MacMillan expressed a quasi-Stravinskian stance to music, stating that a composer needs to be divorced from everything religious, political and moral.⁴ In 2000, he was still wary but less dogmatic about the relationship between music and politics, claiming there are always dangers in expressing a religious or political point of view in music,⁵ and by 2008, he laughed when the 1992 article was repeated to him, and said the complete opposite was now true:

I think perhaps I didn't want to be branded with a particular status (e.g. 'political composer' or 'religious composer'). The Catholic aspect brought a negative twist to people's comments about my music, so to this extent I was right not to make my faith public early in my career. But now I just don't care about that kind of hostility anymore: I've developed a very thick skin over the years.⁶

Yet in the very same year he made the above statement, MacMillan confirmed his comment from 1992, regarding his support for the autonomy of music, which should not be diluted with ulterior motives: “I don't want my music to become a vehicle for propaganda in the way it has for Steve Martland or Louis Andriessen. I think that once it becomes this, it immediately diminishes the art-form, which should exist in its own right, not as a tool for an alternative cause.”⁷ MacMillan therefore presents a somewhat contradictory attitude towards the relationship between extramusical causes and the arts: he argues that music should

³ MacMillan, 1990 <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Sowetan-Spring/2892>>

⁴ MacMillan, quoted in Fisher, 1992: 28.

⁵ MacMillan, 2000: 10.

⁶ In interview with the composer, 21.2.08.

⁷ In interview with the composer, 1.2.08.

not be hijacked for political agendas, yet he has written religious works throughout his career, and many of his earlier works are politically themed.

Unlike Andriessen, MacMillan's early preoccupation with Marxism did not dominate his music for long, and his (MacMillan's) perception of the political Left in general changed considerably between 1990 and 2010. His music is largely no longer concerned with political subjects, and approaching his fiftieth birthday in 2009, the composer frequently mentioned "losing the political ideals of his youth."⁸ This break from the Left seems to have particularly affected MacMillan in artistic circles. In his 1999 speech, 'Scotland's Shame', he describes the arts as a safe 'arena' - the one place where he had never encountered the visceral anti-Catholicism so prominent in all other walks of Scottish society.⁹ Nine years later, this admiration was withdrawn entirely, with the composer stating that his revulsion of anti-Catholic behaviour is particularly acute in the arts: "This has its roots in Romanticism, of course, but a gradual systemisation of radical politics settled in the early 20th century... any old revolution would do, but as long as it overturned manners and lifestyles as well as aesthetics and politics".¹⁰ His despair therefore lies in the Left - a political stance that he used to adhere to but from which he has retreated, due to his religious beliefs and his questioning of contemporary morals.

In 2008, MacMillan admitted that while Andriessen's approach may provide an appropriate model for other composers, it is foreign to him: "it obviously works, since his music would be of a very different kind of music if it did not have its Marxist roots. But that amount of political consumption remains a closed book to me".¹¹ In the same interview, MacMillan continued to stress that he not only found this degree of political consumption too much, but that he was now reluctant to write any kind of political music himself:

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ MacMillan, 2000: 14.

¹⁰ MacMillan, *The Spectator*, 30.1.08.

¹¹ MacMillan, via email, 16.4.08.

I'm more and more uncomfortable about dealing with political issues in relation to my own work... Maybe the politics is just being slowly sifted out. This isn't happening in a vacuum, however. Simultaneously, a lot of my recent music is becoming more abstract, especially the chamber music - the Horn Quintet, the Third String Quartet etc.¹²

The comment that 'a lot' of his music written around the time he made the above statement is becoming more abstract is a significant exaggeration. Appendix A lists all of MacMillan's published works, and shows that in 2007 the Horn Quintet and String Quartet No. 3 were in fact the only abstract works written in this year. In the previous year, 2006, there is not a single example of a work with an entirely abstract title. MacMillan is right in claiming that political elements are far less frequent, compared to his earlier works from the 1980s and 1990s, but these have been replaced by an increase in religious connotations rather than abstract works.

While he undoubtedly opposes agitprop music, MacMillan is far more willing to adapt his compositional style for religious means, such as simple congregational music.¹³ Compromising his musical style for this purpose might itself be interpreted as a socialist attitude. It is perhaps for this reason that MacMillan is far more accepting of Arvo Pärt's *Credo* than the purely political music of Andriessen. In direct opposition to Andriessen's Marxism, Pärt's *Credo* of 1968 defiantly challenged the communist regime that dominated his homeland Estonia at the time, most explicitly with its text "I believe in Jesus Christ" – an unmistakable expression of Pärt's Christianity. MacMillan considers this a brave and important work ("it packed a powerful punch")¹⁴ and insisted that it should be part of the programming of the 2008 RTÉ festival, of which he was Artistic Director. This seems to contradict his opinion against composers such as Andriessen using music as a political

¹² Ibid.

¹³ This topic is explored in detail in Chapter Four, in conjunction with Bach's music for congregational participation.

¹⁴ In conversation with the composer, 21.2.08.

vehicle. Having had this pointed out to him, MacMillan replied that there are certain circumstances where such political expression through music is appropriate, especially where the circumstances were as oppressive as in Pärt's case, but this should not be the impetus for the entirety of the composer's output.¹⁵

Given its chronological and geographical context, the political (as well as religious) statement in Pärt's *Credo* is evident, but the fact that it is essentially a religious work surely affected MacMillan's response to it. Schoenberg, on the other hand, insisted that music should be compromised for neither political nor religious motivations, arguing that "if it is art, it is not for all, and if it is for all, it is not art".¹⁶ What he finds most deplorable in this regard is the acting of some artists who "arrogantly wish to make believe that they descend from their heights in order to give some of their riches to the masses" though he admits there are several composers (such as Offenbach, Johann Strauss and Gershwin), whose feelings actually coincide with those of the "average man in the street."¹⁷

It is difficult to apply this to MacMillan's music, since on a superficial level he seems guilty of the arrogance Schoenberg mentions, especially in his congregational works. However, such 'accessible' music is written to satisfy not a desire for popularity but a practical need: if congregations are to sing, the music must be singable. Beyond this liturgical concern, MacMillan also stresses that as class barriers are beginning to disappear, there should be "some evangelical work done for music".¹⁸ Unlike Schoenberg, MacMillan thinks there needs to be a social role for the composer: "Most composers are very shy... I am also very shy, but I have been able to overcome that because of the necessity to evangelise on behalf of music, both the western tradition and contemporary music".¹⁹ This is one of the very few occasions where

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Schoenberg (1946), 1975: 123-4.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ MacMillan in Astley, Hone and Savage, 2000: 12.

¹⁹ Ibid.

MacMillan uses the term 'evangelise'. He is keen to promote contemporary music, but is wary of mentioning evangelising in the context of sacred music. Andriessen and MacMillan both reject claims of being evangelists. In each case, the composer writes for a specific performer, who is inextricably connected with a specific context: either workers or members of politically-minded instrumental groups such as Orkest De Volharding (Andriessen), or congregations (MacMillan). It is these performers – i.e. 'the converted' – for whom such music is written.²⁰

To this extent, although MacMillan's focus may have shifted emphasis from the political to the religious, he nevertheless resembles Andriessen. While MacMillan may verbally express greater support for the autonomous nature of music than Andriessen, both composers adapt their music for causes they believe in: Marxism and Catholicism. However, several decades before the political elements were 'sifted out' from MacMillan's music, at about the turn of the twenty-first century, these two political and religious systems – Marxism and Catholicism – came together in a movement that affected the composer significantly. Indeed, MacMillan's involvement with this movement influenced many of his major works from the period 1988-1992. This movement began to develop during MacMillan's youth, and eventually became known as Liberation Theology.

Communism in the name of Christianity: Liberation Theology

In the second half of the twentieth century Liberation Theology enjoyed a significant popularity, achieving prominence in the 1970s and 1980s. Originating in Latin America, it considered the Christian faith with reference to the suffering of the poor and the oppressed, their struggle and hope, and offered a critique of society and Christianity, especially the Catholic Church. The movement attempted to fuse the Marxist

²⁰ A more detailed account of this topic is included in Appendix L, where MacMillan is considered alongside Andriessen and Eisler (representing 'agitprop' music), and Stravinsky and Schoenberg (representing the autonomy of music).

ideals of human and economic equality with Catholicism, interpreting sections of the Bible from a revolutionary perspective in order to fight social injustice and poverty. MacMillan became involved with the movement in the 1980s, having been a member of the Junior Marxist League as a teenager. While a member of this group he continued to practice the Catholic faith in which he had been brought up. Given these two early influences, as well as the popularity of the movement in the 1980s, it was perhaps inevitable that he should be drawn to Liberation Theology, and MacMillan was especially attracted to the poetry of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina. He incorporated poems by these women into several Liberation Theology works, interspersing them with liturgical texts. This represents the earliest example of retrospective modernism in MacMillan's music – in this case, a mixture of religious and cultural retrospective modernism - where present-day conflicts are compared with biblical events, and where modern and ancient literary sources are placed alongside one another and set to music. Liberation Theology looks back to texts that are centuries old, and re-interprets them in a way that is relevant to modern social problems. To this extent, it is fundamental in defining MacMillan as a retrospective modernist.

The following discussion initially concerns three of MacMillan's early works: *Búsqueda* (1988); *Cantos Sagrados* (1989); and *Catherine's Lullabies* (1990). However, the works themselves are not explored at length. Instead, they provide an introduction into MacMillan's complicated relationship with the Marxist-Catholic principles of Liberation Theology over the past three decades, culminating with the composer's disassociation from the movement.

Although his political interests were expressed musically as early as 1984 with *Songs of a Just War*²¹, MacMillan's most concentrated Liberation Theology period lies between 1988 and 1990, comprising

²¹ This cycle of three songs is an unpublished work, composed as one of the eight works MacMillan submitted as part of his composition PhD at Durham University. The middle song of this cycle, *The Children*, was subsequently extracted and arranged by the composer for voice and piano.

four works, three of which contain text.²² The textual source for two of these works was the poetry of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, a group of women in Argentina who formed in the early 1980s, in response to the numerous cases of *desaparecidos* (“the disappeared”), a consequence of the ‘Dirty War’ in Argentina, 1976-1983. The 1984 findings of the *Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (National Commission of Disappeared Persons, or CONADEP) created by President Raúl Alfonsín, found the military guilty and condemned many of its members to prison.²³ All of the executions carried out by the military junta were clandestine, with bodies hidden, burned, buried in unmarked graves, or cast into the sea weighed with cement blocks, after the victim was sedated with an injection.²⁴ In this way, there were no dead, only the ‘disappeared’, hence the reason why the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo are often referred to as the ‘Mothers of the Disappeared’.

Búsqueda was the first of MacMillan’s works to incorporate poems written by members of this group, and it arguably marks the most significant step in MacMillan’s compositional development. The various musical and extramusical strands that permeate so much of his work were previously evident, including ‘art’ music, folk music, religion and politics, but each category was isolated in individual works. *Búsqueda* represents the first instance of the compartmental disintegration that was to facilitate the style MacMillan has become typically known for. The composer clearly agrees with the Mothers of the Disappeared that artistic expression – be it through poetry or music – is an important part of the healing process after an atrocity. Taylor explains that even without artistic expression, the victims re-emerged as icons, either as “subversives” (for the military government) or as the

²² *The Exorcism of Rio Sumpul*, a purely orchestral, three-movement work, recalls a helicopter attack in El Salvador. Although the first major massacre that took place here on 14th May 1980 claimed the lives of hundreds of peasants – including women and children – MacMillan’s piece focuses on one specific attack from which, incredibly, nobody was killed.

²³ See Romero, Luis Alberto. 2002. *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*. Trans. James P. Brennan. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press: 216.

²⁴ Romero, 2002: 218.

“disappeared” (for the Madres and other human rights activists) – powerful images that reintroduced the missing into the public sphere.²⁵

It is this topic that permeates *Búsqueda*, a thirty-minute music theatre work, though the piece takes its structure from the Catholic Mass, comprising excerpts taken from the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus and Agnus Dei. These are not so much sections as points of punctuation throughout work’s continuous, single movement, and they act as both a textual and musical backdrop for the work, with MacMillan incorporating instances of plainchant associated with these sections of the mass. However the text is essentially dominated by the poems of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, translated into English by Gilbert Markus OP and several other members of the organization Búsqueda (Search), Oxford, hence the name of the piece.

Although MacMillan draws a connection between political struggle and religion by inserting liturgical references in Latin, the poems themselves are already imbued with this fusion. An examination of the Credo reveals several long, consecutive *senza misura* bars from bar 235, beginning with part of the Credo (“Et incarnatus est de spiritu sancto ex Maria Virgine et homo factus est”), which is then repeated among the eight actors but interspersed with a section from one of the Mothers’ poems: “You are with me, my son, it is not dates nor times that are sad: sad is your life – broken now – *et homo factus est* - Sad is my mother’s heart – impotent now, reliving the suffering of Jesus and Mary - *et incarnates est de spiritu sancto* – etc.” Thus, the Mothers themselves draw the Christian connection, and MacMillan merely accentuates this central theme of a mother’s grief for her lost son.

The following year MacMillan composed the even more impassioned *Cantos Sagrados*, a choral work with organ or string orchestra accompaniment, comprising three contrasting movements. It opens by continuing the prevailing subject of *Búsqueda*: a search for bodies. The texts of the first and third movements are by the political activist, playwright and poet, Ariel Dorfman. MacMillan expresses the

²⁵ Taylor, 1997: 140.

frantic nature of the search and sheer desperation of the mission by dividing the voices into various groups, creating an atmosphere in which information is gradually disseminated throughout the choir. This emphasises the chaotic environment of the poem, where some ask questions, some try to answer them, and others shout that they cannot hear the information for all the frenzied commotion.

The second movement is by stark contrast a calm, mantra-like prayer to the Virgin of Guadalupe, with a text written by Ana Maria Mendoza, an enigmatic figure who was involved with human rights groups in Mexico. Finally, the third movement blends these aspects together, incorporating a poem which describes the brief interaction between a soldier and a person to be executed. The soldier whispers “forgive me, companero”, asking forgiveness from the man he is about to kill, at which point the condemned man’s body fills with such an extreme light that he scarcely hears the sounds of the shots. Following the poem MacMillan inserts the Latin text of the Crucifixus: “Crucifixus etiam pro nobis” (“he was crucified for us”), laced with increasingly faint interjections of “forgive me, companero”. Just as with *Búsqueda’s* Jesus-Mary parallel, the connection between the victim’s execution and Christ’s crucifixion is made explicitly clear, and the fact that the soldier begs forgiveness of the condemned reveals a vibrant glimmer of hope that the political turmoil cannot continue for much longer.

The most recent of the three, choral, Liberation Theology works is also the most obscure, not least because it has received no commercial recording, it is seldom performed, and at the time of writing, even the sheet music could not be purchased. Scored for SATB chorus, brass and percussion, *Catherine’s Lullabies* offers a rather misleading title, for this twenty-minute, single-movement work possesses a very different character to the sentimentality usually associated with a set of lullabies. MacMillan wrote the piece when first daughter, Catherine, was born, explaining that the point of the work was not to wallow in a cosy domesticity but to use and share the

subjective experience of parenthood as a focus for more universal human truths.²⁶

The work includes religious texts which focus specifically on helping the needy and oppressed, taken from Isaiah 61, Ecclesiasticus 4, and the Magnificat. The composer himself admits that while some of these texts were chosen because of their statement of faith and commitment, others were included because of their strong revolutionary message – a message of social justice and equality, intrinsic to the ‘politics of the gospel’: “they are manifestos of spiritual and social liberation. Therefore, they are the finest lullabies for our children – effective endearments, seeds of hope and freedom to blossom in the future”.²⁷ *Catherine’s Lullabies* uses a poem by just one member of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, which formed the starting point for the piece. In his programme note to the work, MacMillan reveals his admiration for the poem’s ability to express “a sense of perpetual hope and mercy even in the light of their children being taken away and destroyed by the military regime.”²⁸

These three Liberation Theology works have significant implications for some of MacMillan’s later pieces: the structure of *Cantos Sagrados*, comprising three movements, which each have an English text and conclude with a Latin, sacred text, is emulated in the ten movements of *St John Passion* (2007); the audible breathing in and out that opens and concludes *Búsqueda* is clearly evident at the conclusion of the fourth movement of *Sun-Dogs* (2006); and musical material from *Catherine’s Lullabies* is recycled in the second movement and conclusion of *The Berserking* (1990) and *Angel* (1993). These three Liberation Theology works also act as a clear and early sign of MacMillan’s retrospective modernism from a religio-cultural perspective, establishing a strong connection between the biblical past and the then present political climate in Latin America.

²⁶ MacMillan, 1990: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Catherine-s-Lullabies/5648>>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

In addition to these pieces of 1988-1990, which refer specifically to the political turmoil of Latin America during and after the Dirty War, there is one further work from about this time which also relates to the theme of liberation: *Veni, Veni Emmanuel* (1992). This percussion concerto has become one of MacMillan's most popular and frequently performed works, arguably due to the variety of interpretations it offers: it contains no text, and therefore the extramusical element (in this case religious/political) is not as prominent as in the aforementioned choral works, allowing listeners to easily appreciate the music for its own sake; the titles of the movements chart the journey from Advent to Easter, providing a sense of chronology in parallel with the Church calendar for listeners who are aware of this; and the text of the eponymous fifteenth-century French Advent plainchant upon which the entire work is based has clear political resonances: "O come, o come Emmanuel, redeem thy captive Israel".

However, this is not the only text associated with the work, as the composer explains in his programme note: "Advent texts proclaim the promised day of liberation from fear, anguish and oppression, and this work is an attempt to mirror that in music, finding its initial inspiration in the Gospel according to St Luke, Ch. 21." It is clear to see why this chapter in particular appealed to MacMillan, given its political content:

But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. (Luke 21: 12)

You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death (Luke 21: 16)

When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21: 20-24)

The concerto therefore refers to two instances of biblical oppression, between Jews and Gentiles in general (Luke 21), and the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt (the Book of Exodus), referred to (though without its text) in the plainchant dominating each of the work's variations. Given this dual reference to liberation from oppression, the concerto should be considered in conjunction with MacMillan's other Liberation Theology works, even though its subject matter is less specific than some of these other pieces by not including poetry of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo.

Although *Veni, Veni, Emmanuel* may therefore reasonably be considered as the last of the MacMillan's Liberation Theology works, traces are vaguely evident in some of his later pieces, such as Symphony No. 3 'Silence' (2003), a musical response to Japanese author Shusaku Endo's novel about Christian missionaries in seventeenth-century Japan, *Silence*. The 'silence' referred to here concerns the relationship between God and man, particularly at times of great physical and psychological hardship, as outlined by Endo in his novel. However, MacMillan himself, while appreciating the relationship to Liberation Theology, does not consider the symphony as a "Liberation Theology work"²⁹, and this is supported by the fact that after 1992 his music expresses a clear retreat from this political area.

Retreating from Liberation Theology and Marxism

MacMillan's involvement with and disassociation from Liberation Theology essentially parallels the alternating attitude of the Catholic Church. There existed an extremely complex relationship between the Church and the various, contrasting political groups and ideologies circulating in Argentina between the early 1960s and the rise of the Radical government in the late 1980s. Although the relationship is far

²⁹ MacMillan, via email: 13.1.08

too detailed to discuss fully here, it is necessary to provide at least a rough outline in order explain the Church's oscillating involvement with Liberation Theology and MacMillan's subsequent rejection of the movement.

Pope John XXIII initiated support of what was soon to become known as 'Liberation Theology'. This ideological shift in the church expressed itself officially in three encyclicals. The first was in 1961 with *Mater et Magister*, which warned of a new kind of global imperialism by which wealthy capitalist nations were forcing the rest of the world into dependency. Two years later, *Pacem in Terris* called upon Christians to involve themselves in the struggle for social justice and to collaborate with social reformers, even Marxists.³⁰ Finally in 1967 came *Populorum Progressio*, which expressed sympathy with the violent upheavals in the Third World and called for fundamental changes in the world economy.

In Argentina in the 1970s however, this collaboration with Marxist groups was not accepted, for communism was seen as the enemy of Christianity. Colonel Horacio E. Querol, who claimed the modern world's troubles began with the individualism engendered by the Protestant Reformation, blamed the Argentine educational system for "failing to teach the principles that God is the essence of truth and that the truth about God is to be found in the eternal church He created: the Roman Catholic Church".³¹ Colonel Querol was by no means an isolated example of this mentality. In the *Revista del Circulo Militar*, a prestigious military publication in Argentina, articles appeared throughout the 1960s arguing that Christianity was the only effective antidote to communism, Protestantism caused decadence and anarchy, and liberalism inevitably led to Marxism-Leninism.³²

During the turbulent period of the *proceso*, the military-led regime that utilized extreme and violent force to maintain order, the

³⁰ Lewis, Paul H. 2002. *Guerrillas and Generals: The "Dirty War" in Argentina*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group: 27.

³¹ Lewis, 2002: 142.

³² Ibid.

Church's stance remained far from monolithic, not least because anyone linked to subversion of the regime soon 'disappeared'. Some Argentine priests and bishops were actually sympathetic to the *proceso's* 'Dirty War', assuring journalists that many of the so-called *desaparecidos* were actually living in Europe; but others strongly opposed the regime and suffered as a result, including Monsenor Enrique Angelelli, who was killed in a staged car accident on 4th August 1976.³³

The Church's association with Liberation Theology under pope John Paul II (1978-2005) was similarly contradictory. In 1979 a group of bishops established a social pastoral team to rebuild the link. In 1981, the Church issued *The Catholic Church and the National Community*, which reaffirmed republican principles and indicated the Church's preference for democracy, its distancing itself from the military regime, and its sympathies for society's rising demands.³⁴

However, several years later the Vatican issued the deeply critical 'Some Aspects of Liberation Theology'³⁵ in 1984 and 1986, after which Liberation Theology soon faded. The secularization that accompanied the rise of democracy was incompatible with many of the Church's teachings. Perhaps the most explicit of these incompatibilities occurred in 1987, with the legalization of divorce. It is ironic that in its attempts to act out the message of the Gospel to promote equality of wealth, an ideal that also lies at the very heart of Marx's communism, the Church facilitated a secularized society. The conservative sectors of the Church in Argentina became despondent: democracy, they said, had turned out to be a compendium of all the century's evils – drugs, terrorism, abortion, and pornography.³⁶ Supporters of Liberation Theology therefore faced two paths: one which was essentially political and secular; and one which continued to sympathise with political

³³ Lewis, 2002: 185.

³⁴ Romero, 2002: 258.

³⁵ This was issued with the authority of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the 'Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith', who later became Pope Benedict XVI.

³⁶ Romero, 2002: 259.

injustice while adhering to the Church's teachings. MacMillan, a devout Catholic, chose the latter.

Just as MacMillan expressed strong concerns that music should not be employed for political aims, as in the case of Eisler and Andriessen, many critics leveled a similar charge against Liberation Theology: the Santa Fe Committee accused liberation theologians of using the church "as a political weapon against private property and productive capitalism by infiltrating the religious community with ideas that are less Christian than Communist".³⁷ One of the most significant challenges to the movement came from Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, then auxiliary bishop of Medellin and secretary of CELAM.³⁸ Trujillo charged that Liberation Theology was unduly influenced by Marxist thinking, and that identifying the poor of the Gospels with Marx's proletariat would only encourage the class war.³⁹ This criticism was compounded by papal criticisms. Pope John Paul II had seen the bankruptcy of Marxism and in his native Poland, and this inevitably swayed his perception of the movement, to the extent that during his visit to the CELAM conference in Puebla, Mexico in 1979, he declared roundly that "the idea of Christ as a political figure, a revolutionary, as the subversive man from Nazareth, does not tally with the Church's catechesis".⁴⁰

However, this should not be interpreted simplistically as a complete rejection of the movement. Hebblethwaite claims that it was assumed *either* that the Pope would endorse the 'conservative' line *or* that he would endorse the 'liberation' and 'progressive' line, whereas he ended up doing neither, offering instead an alternative form of the theology of liberation. Hebblethwaite explains two consequences of this alternative approach: first, Liberation Theology, as developed in Latin America, was critically scrutinized and found gravely wanting; second,

³⁷ Berryman, 1987: 4.

³⁸ CELAM: Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (Latin American Episcopal Conference).

³⁹ Hebblethwaite, 1999: 181.

⁴⁰ Hebblethwaite, 1999: 182.

the concern for social justice expressed by Liberation Theology was validated and confirmed.⁴¹

This mid-way ground clearly made an impact on MacMillan, who was already beginning to have doubts about Liberation Theology, and particularly its connection with Marxist principles: “The papal criticisms probably affected me, but I was beginning to realise for myself that Liberation Theology was too close politically to Marxism, and apparently incapable of offering a critique of the materialism at the core of secular politics”.⁴² Such claims have been supported by numerous Liberation Theology authors, and with justification. José Miguez Bonino’s *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* is criticized by Sigmund for exactly the same reasons MacMillan expressed in the above quotation. Sigmund claims that Bonino’s book is influenced almost entirely by Marxist sociology, and almost no theology.⁴³ Examining Bonino’s book itself, such a claim is far from inaccurate. Although he stresses that Marxist dogmatism is to be avoided, he also argues that Marxism offers “scientific analysis and a number for verifiable hypotheses.”⁴⁴ Bonino describes it as the “best possible instrument available for an effective and rational realization of human possibilities in historical life.”⁴⁵ This mentality continues throughout the book: liberation has obliterated theology.

As the movement fell into increasing decline, responses to Liberation Theology varied. Petrella categorises these more recent responses into three groups: ‘reasserting core ideas’, ‘reformulating or revising basic categories’, and ‘critiquing idolatry’, whether of the market or of modernity at large.⁴⁶ MacMillan undoubtedly falls into the first of these categories, which Petrella describes as the position which “disentangles Liberation Theology’s core ideas – concepts such as the preferential option for the poor, the reign of God and liberation – from

⁴¹ Hebblethwaite, 1999: 182-3.

⁴² MacMillan, via email, 25.5.08.

⁴³ Sigmund, 1990: 53.

⁴⁴ Bonino, 1975: 85.

⁴⁵ Bonino, 1975: 97.

⁴⁶ Petrella, 2004: 2-11.

Marxism as a social scientific mediation, and socialism as a historical project.”⁴⁷ In other words, it is possible to distinguish the essential truths of Liberation Theology from their Marxist context. MacMillan agrees with such a distinction, claiming that Christianity does not need the guidance of the secular left when it comes to gospel values: “Catholics have been duped on this and should strive to rediscover the original Christocentric reason for loving the poor and dispossessed, which has nothing to do with Marx.”⁴⁸

However much his political stance may have altered since his youth, MacMillan has always respected papal authority. This has been a constant throughout his life, and is demonstrated musically in works such as *Invocation*, a musical setting of a poem written by John Paul II, and *Mass for Blessed Henry John Newman*, written for Benedict XVI’s visit to Britain in September 2010. It was only with papal authorisation that MacMillan encouraged and developed his Marxist tendencies, and as this sanctioning gave way to criticism, he followed the Church. In conversation with the composer in 2010, he said he considered his support of Liberation Theology to be ‘an understandable misreading of the times’ and that he now thinks of himself as a ‘moral conservative’ rather than a left-wing socialist.⁴⁹ From both his music and his speeches, such a self-assessment seems accurate: the communist-inflected Christianity of his formative years has been replaced by a fervent advocacy of the Catholic Church, and he now refers to the group he was once a member of as a means of attacking political and musical figures in speeches.

Although MacMillan rejected Liberation Theology, one aspect from the movement that remained with him was a sense of understanding the importance of the relationship between past and present. Indeed, it was because of this that he eventually rejected the movement, as it became less concerned with the traditions of the Church, and focused solely on modernisation and secularisation. For

⁴⁷ Petrella, 2004: 3.

⁴⁸ MacMillan, via email, 25.5.08.

⁴⁹ In conversation with the composer, 3.5.10.

MacMillan, tradition could simply be ignored, and must always inform the present. As definitions of the Left developed, MacMillan broke away, becoming a political and moral conservative. The central concept of Liberation Theology - namely the idealistic relationship between tradition and the modern - failed in practice, but MacMillan persisted with this ideal on his own terms, using it to influence all his subsequent works. The next chapter examines how MacMillan took this concept – the essence of what I call his ‘retrospective modernism’⁵⁰ - and applied it to his own country, Scotland.

⁵⁰ The composer has never mentioned this term.

Chapter 2. The Shame of a Nation: Provoking Modern Scotland with its Past

‘Scotland’s Shame’: The Speech; the Debate

MacMillan’s speech, delivered at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 1999, resurrected the Scottish sectarianism debate between Catholics and Protestants in a very public context. Entitled ‘Scotland’s Shame’, the speech argued that in many sectors of modern Scotland, bigotry and discrimination against Catholics was still prevalent. His main focus in the speech concerns looking back and re-considering Scotland’s past in order to resolve its current prejudices, and as such the speech represents the composer’s most public and effective expression of his cultural retrospective modernism. After its delivery, numerous sociologists immediately retorted that such claims were based on nothing but myths, while others hailed the composer for his courageous statement. This resulted in a highly controversial debate, not only within the context of journalistic media, but also in academic literature. Several books have taken MacMillan’s speech as an impetus or a basis upon which to build various related arguments.

The book *Scotland’s Shame?*¹, a collection of essays in response to MacMillan’s speech, seeks to examine why and how the composer managed to achieve such a striking effect with his speech. It begins with the full text of the speech itself (the first time it had been published), followed by contributions from a wide range of sociologists, historians and writers, divided into various parts: ‘Scotland is a Divisive, Bigoted Society’; ‘The Waning of Social Exclusion’; ‘The Schools Question’; ‘Perspectives from the Presbyterian Tradition’; ‘The Search for Evidence’; and finally, two ‘Commentaries’ by Tom Devine (the book’s editor) and MacMillan respectively.

While MacMillan’s main concern in ‘Scotland’s Shame’ is the discrimination and prejudice between Catholics and Protestants, he

¹ Devine, 2000.

includes references to Communist leaders to support his argument. He claimed that the Reformation of 1560 became “year zero, marking the beginning of a cultural revolution” and that “one could draw interesting parallels between Mao Tse-tung and John Knox, Pol Pot and Andrew Melville (well, perhaps not)”.² These comments imply a direct link between the Reformation and Communism, both of which led to a secularized liberalism. ‘Year zero’ represents the antithesis of MacMillan’s retrospective modernism, since it breaks off completely from tradition in an attempt to start anew.

Regarding ‘year zero’ and its implications for religion, it is surprising that MacMillan mentions how the arts’ respect for the past engenders the one environment (‘arena’) in Scotland where he has never encountered the visceral anti-Catholicism he experiences in other aspects of Scottish society.³ There have been numerous instances of MacMillan’s music being criticised not for its musical technique or its expression, but for the extramusical subject of expression, often religious. Music critic Richard Morrison supports the claim that religion in the arts today is far from welcome: “They [MacMillan’s works] blaze out his fervent Roman Catholicism – his belief (desperately unfashionable in arty circles) that the power of the Holy Spirit can change lives”.⁴ It should be stressed that eight years after the ‘Scotland’s Shame’ speech, the composer withdrew his praise of the arts establishment, commenting that he now (2007) found it to be increasingly hostile towards religion.⁵

MacMillan’s most significant and vocal opponent in the ‘Scotland’s Shame’ debate was Steve Bruce, Professor of Sociology at the University of Aberdeen. Bruce is one of the key sociological figures associated with religion and politics in Scotland and Northern Ireland during the last several decades. He has written extensively on these topics and has expressed, on numerous occasions and in both

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Morrison, 2007, *The Times*.

⁵ In conversation with the composer, 10.12.07

journalistic and academic literature, a strong opposition to the assertions made by MacMillan. The extent to which Bruce was catalytic in the organisation and production of *Scotland's Shame?* is therefore somewhat surprising, especially since he claims to have chosen Devine as the book's editor simply because he was much better known.⁶ Like Bruce, Devine is another significant writer who has written on the subject of Scotland's religious and political conflicts – both past and present. In the very same article where he claims credit for choosing Devine as the more established figure, Bruce mentions his own “long career of academic writing (eighteen scholarly books, fifty-seven essays in edited collections and sixty articles in refereed journals)”.⁷ Indeed, Bruce is undoubtedly the most significant name associated with the subject of recent and contemporary Scottish culture, not Devine, whose writings tend to extend further back into Scottish history.⁸

However, despite having had the original idea for the book and choosing its editor, Bruce was dissatisfied with the final product: “Unfortunately, it failed. Very few of the contributors took the opportunity to advance evidence for their views or even to state them more clearly so they could be tested. Instead most just sounded off.”⁹ Unhappy with the final version of *Scotland's Shame?*, Bruce and several other co-writers produced *Sectarianism in Scotland*.¹⁰ Again, this was specifically in response to MacMillan's speech. The book briefly outlines the history of Scottish sectarianism, before discussing contemporary situations, addressing several aspects of life MacMillan mentioned: legal disabilities, political restrictions, education systems, and socio-economic status. Each topic concludes that there is no evidence to suggest Catholics suffer any injustice whatsoever. Various statistics are

⁶ Bruce, 2003: 271.

⁷ Bruce, 2003: 269.

⁸ Having questioned Prof. Bruce about this, his response was that Devine had made almost no public comment on sectarianism and hence would alienate fewer people. He also said that Devine is better known, since although he (Bruce) may have written more than Devine, the latter is much better known because history is more popular than sociology, and Devine is essentially an historian (Bruce, via email, 22.11.07).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Bruce et al, 2004.

presented and discussed, lending strength to the book's argument. However, there are passages where the authors' text reveals their anti-Catholic (or rather, anti-religious) stance with remarkable transparency. The use of rhetorical language (personalizing the reader with the author by talking about "we" or "us" as secular citizens) is ill suited to an academic contribution, as is the patronizing register employed to describe Catholics, both past and present: "When few of us have any church connection and the main Christian churches have dispensed with large parts of their historic creed... it is hard for us to imagine a world in which people actually believe in a creator God, the divinity of Jesus, the revealed nature of the Bible and the sacramental power of the Church."¹¹

The above comment is particularly telling not so much of the increase of secularisation in Britain in recent years, but of the highly subjective, anti-religious agenda promoted by these authors. This is made explicitly clear when it is considered in conjunction with the more religiously sensitive approach Bruce adopted just nine years earlier in *Religion in Modern Britain*: "Given the frequency with which 'decline' and its synonyms will be used in this chapter, we might begin by reminding ourselves that God and his worship remain an important part of the lives of very many people".¹² The difference between the levels of respect in these two introductory passages present is stark, revealing a far higher degree of tolerance and objectivity in the earlier book.

In addition to these various negative literary reactions to 'Scotland's Shame', there were several positive responses, most notably 'Nil by Mouth', an organization which both defends the premise that sectarianism is still present in Scotland and aims to tackle it. It has published detailed documentation, including a thorough report on the topic of 'The Extent of Sectarianism Online'¹³. It has also responded directly to MacMillan's 1999 speech, with an article for *States of*

¹¹ Bruce, Glendinning, Paterson and Rosie, 2004: 12-13.

¹² Bruce, 1995: 30.

¹³ O'Loan, Poulter and McMenemy, 2005.

Scotland, entitled 'Sectarianism – Still Scotland's Shame?' by Fred Shedden. Indeed, MacMillan was indirectly responsible for the formation of Nil by Mouth, which was formally launched the year after his speech in August 2000.¹⁴

Scottish sectarianism is undoubtedly a highly controversial and contentiously fought topic, causing a significant division of opinion between sociologists, as the available literature testifies. There had been very little written about this area since James Handley's pioneering work in the 1940s, until Steve Bruce produced *No Pope of Rome* in 1986. This book examines Protestant and Catholic relationships in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with a detailed final chapter recounting the papal visit to Scotland in 1982, entitled 'The Anti-Christ in Scotland'. Though the climate was unsettled, it was in fact far more peaceful than had been anticipated, and Bruce claims the rhetoric of journalistic literature resulted in many inflated reports and misleading comments.¹⁵ MacMillan, as a twenty-three-year-old socialist Catholic, would have been very aware of this event. This is significant, particularly with reference to his concerns about Scottish sectarianism today, for it may be that previous events (or more specifically, news reports of previous events) caused the composer to exaggerate the current Catholic-Protestant climate in Scotland. Bruce believed this to be the case: "There is no evidence to assert that anti-Catholic bigotry is endemic in Scottish society. Catholics and Protestants live exactly the same lives. It might have been the case in the past, but Mr MacMillan is 50 years out of date".¹⁶ This implies that within the context of this debate, MacMillan's cultural retrospective modernism places too great an emphasis on retrospection, which subsequently affects his perception of modern Scotland.

The dispute between MacMillan and certain sociologists may lie in their definitions of anti-Catholicism. MacMillan states that the endemic encompasses a strand of anti-Catholicism that is not

¹⁴ Shedden, 2003: 1.

¹⁵ Bruce, 1986: 234-236.

¹⁶ Bruce, *BBC Special Report*: 1999.

necessarily explicit or overtly offensive. Bruce and other writers seem to consider sectarianism only in these terms. For example, in *No Pope of Rome*, the 1982 papal visit is described as a much-hyped controversy with very little result: there were hardly any arrests, and the Protestant opposition was embarrassingly small.¹⁷ Jack Glass, a fervent Protestant campaigner, was disgusted that the 80,000 Orangemen didn't contribute in any way to opposing the visit.¹⁸ Although these are convincing arguments, the fundamental question remains: if sectarianism in Scotland were as insignificant an issue in 1999 as it was in the 1980s, why did MacMillan's speech generate such publicity and aggressive reactions?

Part of the process in answering this question must surely refer to the increase in Scottish secularisation, another topic Bruce has written about at length. On this subject there is little debate, as the statistics are much more objective. The majority of people in the West no longer regard religion as necessary or important. Bruce, for instance, argues that: "Dogmatism was replaced by relativism [...] With increased diversity came a steady increase in the proportion of people who had little or no religious affiliation".¹⁹ MacMillan does not deny the increase in secularisation, nor does he oppose it: "Yes, Scotland is Presbyterian; yes, Scotland is secular. These are two aspects of the national character in which I rejoice wholeheartedly".²⁰ However, opinion starts to become divided when considering contemporary (secular) responses to religion and those who practice it.

While the strength of the surveys and statistics of Bruce and like-minded sociologists is often considerable, other literature suggests their research is too selective. Articles written within the last decade propose that sectarianism in Scotland is far from mythical. Patricia Walls and Rory Williams (co-authors of one of the chapters in Devine's *Scotland's Shame?*) have written at length on this topic, and challenged

¹⁷ Bruce, 1986: 236-238.

¹⁸ Bruce, 1986: 240.

¹⁹ Bruce, 2003: 252.

²⁰ MacMillan, 2000: 16.

Bruce on a number of issues, as in their rebuttal of Bruce et al.'s claim that sectarianism is a myth.²¹ A year after the publication of *Sectarianism in Scotland*, the same four co-authors of this book produced an article in the journal *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, entitled 'Religious Discrimination in Scotland: Fact or Myth?' Bruce et al.'s article was formed in response to an article in the same journal by Patricia Walls and Rory Williams, 'Sectarianism at work: Accounts of employment discrimination against Irish Catholics in Scotland'.²² The basis of Bruce et al.'s argument is that the research methodology employed by Walls and Williams contained weaknesses resulting from the treatment of respondents as "privileged expert witnesses for matters beyond their immediate knowledge."²³ By contrast, Bruce claims he and his researchers "present large-scale statistical evidence that calls into question the accuracy of respondents' perceptions and hence the legitimacy of the conclusions that Walls and Williams draw from their qualitative data".²⁴ In addition to questioning the age range of participants in Walls and Williams' work ("half the sample were aged 46 and half were 66"²⁵), the writers are also criticised for only arguing with participants on one particular issue: employment discrimination.²⁶

Walls and Williams responded to Bruce et al.'s criticisms, first by referring to MacMillan's speech and the re-ignition of the debate, and then by attacking Bruce through his varying attitudes towards those who are social scientists, and those who are not. They claim that the latter are simply dismissed, and when Bruce et al. are confronted with social scientists who present evidence at odds with their thesis, they attack the methodology instead.²⁷

Walls and Williams are by no means alone in their counter-argument to the 'Bruce et al' contingent. Tristan Clayton has argued that

²¹ Walls, 2005: 759-767.

²² Walls and Williams, 2003.

²³ Bruce et al., 2005: 151.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Bruce et al., 2005: 151-2.

²⁶ Bruce et al., 2005: 155.

²⁷ Walls and Williams, 2005: 761

this is still very much a problem in contemporary Scotland, writing an article entitled 'Diasporic Otherness: racism, sectarianism and 'national exteriority in modern Scotland'²⁸. Having first discussed racism in Scotland, Clayton shifts his attention to sectarianism, and explains why the latter is a much more vague and complicated topic to discuss: "Recording incidents as 'sectarian' is not officially practised, not only because of the difficulty in ascertaining what constitutes a sectarian act, but also because of the fear of over-reporting, and the unwelcome media attention this would entail."²⁹ Football emerged as one of the first indicators of the problem, and as Clayton was shown round the Protestant 'stronghold' of Ibrox (home to Glasgow Rangers Football Club) by a local teenage Catholic boy, the youth said that although it was generally a safe area, he would never wear his Celtic football shirt or any other such markers.³⁰ Clayton claims that this reinforces the idea that sectarianism has become an embedded mind-set as much as a visible confrontation³¹ and it is also strongly reminiscent of a phrase MacMillan uses in 'Scotland's Shame': "sleep-walking bigotry".³² Clayton sums up the sectarian debate in a succinct but ultimately unsatisfying manner: "In summary, sectarianism is an issue which contains paradoxes - it is palpably evident, yet often denied. It is seen as irrational, yet is vigorously defended."³³

The Sectarianism debate, a decade on

As the temporal distance from 'Scotland's Shame' increased, MacMillan engaged in several public retrospectives to his speech. In 2008 he wrote an article published in *The Guardian*, considering the developments that

²⁸ Clayton, 2005: 99-116.

²⁹ Clayton, 2005: 107. The majority of Clayton research for this paper was based on the responses of fifty-six interviewees, most of whom were recruited from notices he had placed in local media, public places and on the Internet.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² MacMillan, 2000: 15.

³³ Clayton, 2005: 111.

had arisen since 1999. 'How I rattled the deniers'³⁴ reveals a slightly calmer MacMillan, although the passion for this cause remains clearly evident. In 2006, he wrote an article for *The Tablet*, a weekly Catholic publication for which he has written several articles in recent years. 'Outing a secret shame' adopts a positive register, as its author comments on the hope of reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants, inspired by his own family: his paternal grandfather was involved in the Black and Tans and despite being a Protestant, left France and Belgium (where he fought) with a profound affection for the Catholicism he encountered there.³⁵ It is also worth noting that MacMillan's father was Protestant, while his mother was Catholic.

By 2009 MacMillan's political interest, though now largely separated from his music, was still very apparent through his many literary works, namely newspaper articles, interviews, and chapters in books: "I still regard myself as a bit of a political animal, in a way. I'm not particularly proud of that, but I just can't help it. It's the way my mind is wired".³⁶ Certain political themes remained constant for the composer, such as sectarianism in Scotland, the tension between religion and the increasingly secular British culture, the distinction between the old and new Left, and the relationship between politics and the arts, particularly modernism and Marxism. MacMillan's attitude to these areas has not necessarily changed, but has been expressed in different ways over the course of his career.

After the 1999 'Scotland's Shame' speech, followed by the Scottish-themed works written in the subsequent few years, it was inevitable that in the many interviews MacMillan gave he would be questioned about the repercussions. Asked in 2008 whether he thought the culture was beginning to change, the composer replied positively, admitting that while it is still a racially fraught place, the Scots had

³⁴ MacMillan, *The Guardian*, 7.8.06.

³⁵ MacMillan, *The Tablet*, 5.8.06.

³⁶ Whittle, 2009: 28.

given themselves the kind of cultural and intellectual facility to deal with a long-standing problem.³⁷

However, in 2009, a decade after the speech and just one year after the hopeful comment above, MacMillan was once again involved with the topic of sectarianism, and as before, the platform for this discussion was the context of rival football teams in Scotland. The incident concerned Rev. Stuart MacQuarrie, Glasgow University's official chaplain, who complained to the media about the singing of the song 'The Fields of Athenry', which he regarded as "vile, vicious and racist."³⁸ MacMillan defended the song by drawing parallels with other anthems, arguing that 'The Fields of Athenry' was a love song and its political content is minimal.³⁹ He also suggested that this outburst from MacQuarrie was in retaliation to the condemnation of Rangers supporters singing *We are the Billy Boys* and other anti-Catholic/anti-Irish songs at football matches:

Rangers fans have been justly criticised for their adoption of the revolting Famine Song, which mocks the victims of the Irish Famine and calls for people of Irish descent in Britain to stop referring to it, and to return home to Ireland. I suspect MacQuarrie is trying to draw a political and ethical equivalence between this nauseating chant, which has been universally condemned, and an Irish ballad of exile and lost love, sung and celebrated internationally by people of various ethnic and religious hues.⁴⁰

Despite this incident, by 2009 MacMillan remained relatively optimistic about developments in the sectarianism debate. Having written about the Stuart MacQuarrie case in January of that year, several months later in an interview he reaffirmed this outlook, but simultaneously highlighted a greater concern. This time, when asked if changes had been recognized in the decade since the 'Scotland's Shame' speech, MacMillan replied: "Yes, in the sense that these things can now be discussed. I think the Scottish problem has proved to be part of a global prejudice against the church. Someone said recently that "anti-

³⁷ Hallam, 2008: 29.

³⁸ MacQuarrie, quoted in MacMillan, *The Times*, 11.1.09.

³⁹ MacMillan, *The Times*, 11.1.09.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Catholicism is the new anti-Semitism of the liberal intellectual".⁴¹ While he must surely take some pride in successfully raising awareness and discussion about a controversial, unfashionable topic, MacMillan's attention has now turned to the broader issue of conflict between religion and secularization across the world.

The present study is in no way obliged to reach a conclusion about what is essentially a sociological issue, but the above account has attempted to present a central concern for MacMillan, as well as his supporters and critics. In attacking the Scottish press, who he claimed fail to tackle the issue of sectarianism fairly or seriously, MacMillan ostracized himself from his country to some extent, but clearly considered the issue to be of such gravity that he was willing to make this sacrifice. He draws attention to the distinction between Scottish and English media, commenting that English visitors to Glasgow are greatly shocked by the strength of anti-Catholicism in *The Herald's* letters page.⁴²

About this topic, MacMillan specifically mentioned the *Sunday Herald's* defence of Donald Findlay, QC, who was caught on camera singing sectarian songs including *The Sash and Follow, Follow*. Donald Findlay is one of the most well-known and established lawyers and public figures in Scotland, often pictured smoking his characteristic pipe. He resigned as vice-chairman of Rangers Football Club following his celebrations of his side's Scottish Cup victory, when the Dean of the Faculty, Nigel Emslie, filed a complaint of "serious and reprehensible misconduct" against him.⁴³ That such a highly regarded figure of Scottish society should behave in this manner was especially controversial, and MacMillan used this example in his 'Scotland's Shame' speech to argue that "the sanctimonious Scottish myth that all bigots are uneducated loutish morons from the lowest level of society was undermined at a stroke".⁴⁴ The composer was as disgusted by

⁴¹ Hewett, 2009, *The Telegraph*, 22.4.09.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sport/football/scottish_premier/357392.stm>

⁴⁴ MacMillan, 2000: 17.

Findlay's performance itself as the *Sunday Herald's* defence of it, which dismissed the incident as an overreaction by over-sensitive Catholics, who should not take offence if a "nice but tipsy man sings a folksong that doesn't quite reflect admiration for them and their kind."⁴⁵ MacMillan explains that these seemingly 'rousing but harmless' jokes and folksongs, include the lines "Fuck your Pope and the Vatican" and "We're up to our knees in Fenian blood, surrender or you'll die, for we are the Bridgeton Billy Boys".⁴⁶ The following discussion examines how MacMillan incorporates this song – and a specific musical reference to Donald Findlay – into *A Scotch Bestiary*, as well as the similar inclusion of the Orange Loyalist anthem, *The Sash*, into his Sinfonietta. Far from being reserved for speeches and articles, this debate inevitably infiltrated several of MacMillan's compositions.

'Scotland's Shame' in Music

The views of those opposing MacMillan's claims have already been discussed at length, as well as those who have attempted to consider the debate from both sides of the argument, such as Tom Devine, who edited the book *Scotland's Shame?* We have also seen that MacMillan made his own response to his 1999 speech a decade later, examining the developments that had occurred as a result. However, in between the original speech and this 2009 reflection, he expressed his opinion of some of the central figures related to the debate in two major keyboard concertos: the organ concerto *A Scotch Bestiary*, and Piano Concerto No. 2, written in close succession (2003-4 and 1999, rev. 2003 respectively). Not only were these works written in close proximity, but they were also recorded for the first time on the same disc, and even with the same soloist – Wayne Marshall – alternating between organ and piano. By discussing these two works however, three pieces are actually referred to, since the first movement of the Second Piano

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Concerto is *Cumnock Fair*, an earlier single movement piece for piano and orchestra,⁴⁷ written in 1999, the year of the 'Scotland's Shame' speech. This triptych/diptych unambiguously reflects MacMillan's tense relationship with Scotland, perhaps more than any other works in his output up to 2010.

The following discussion examines this pair of Scottish-themed keyboard concertos, written several years after 'Scotland's Shame', but also several works written before the speech, which address this extramusical subject, most notably *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*. Another of these pre-'Scotland's Shame' works extends back to 1985 (Piano Sonata), composed fourteen years before the speech was delivered. The tension between Catholics and Protestants in Scotland has clearly been a concern for MacMillan since his days as a student, and possibly even earlier. When discussing the translation of this topic into music therefore, it is important to consider works written both before and after the 'Scotland's Shame' speech.

In all these works we see strands of MacMillan's cultural retrospective modernism, which is expressed by musical and extramusical means. The latter is perhaps the most explicit, for the sole impetus of MacMillan's efforts in the Scottish sectarianism debate is the hope that the societal wounds of modern Scotland can be healed by re-examining and accepting its past: historical, national retrospection benefits modern times. In musical terms, this retrospective modernism is evident through several features relating to twentieth-century modernist music, such as minimalism and the techniques of the Second Viennese School. However, MacMillan's musical retrospection also extends further back into musical history, making use of traditional musical rhetoric and gestures, and also quoting notable works from the history of music. His retrospective modernism is therefore not to be interpreted as a retrospection solely focused on the modernist movement in the arts in the twentieth century, even though this is certainly relevant to his musical language; rather, it is a broad

⁴⁷ MacMillan also wrote a version for piano and string sextet.

retrospection, examining the twentieth century but also the centuries before this, and considering these from both musical and social/national perspectives. For MacMillan, this historical retrospection is paramount to the development of the present, both in his own development as a composer, and in the development of contemporary Scottish society in general.

Scotland's Shame in Music I: Pre-Scotland's Shame

MacMillan's dissatisfaction with his country was musically expressed from a relatively early stage. One of his first and most explicit critiques of his homeland was his first piano concerto, *The Berserking*. The composer commented that in the late 1980s there was a desire on the part of many artists in Scotland not to try to rewrite the past but to accept it and analyse it on their own terms, and that *The Berserking* sprang from this desire.⁴⁸ He argues that rather than simply navel-gazing, this was a necessary process for the Scottish people to know themselves, and to know their own culture and history, "warts and all".⁴⁹

MacMillan describes the central theme of *The Berserking* as misdirected energy, in this case, football hooliganism. The tension between Protestant and Catholics in Scotland is arguably most pronounced within this sporting context, and as a keen fan of Celtic Football Club, this is an issue MacMillan has witnessed first-hand on repeated occasions. The Berserkers were Norse warriors, who worked themselves into a frenzy in the heat of battle or during laborious work. The actual fit of madness the Berserker experienced was referred to as *Berserkerang* ("going berserk"), and the condition is said to have begun with the chattering of the teeth and a chill in the body, after which the face swelled and changed its colour, and then a great rage followed, during which they howled as wild animals, bit the edge of

⁴⁸ MacMillan in Johnson and Sutton, 1997: 28.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

their shields, and cut down everything they met without discriminating between friend or foe.⁵⁰ In attempting to express this excessive use of energy with no sense of progressing toward a productive end goal, MacMillan imitates the minimalistic style of John Adams in the concerto's outer movements: the third movement's repetitive but gradually developing material is particularly reminiscent of MacMillan's American contemporary (see Ex. 2.1). The rondo-structure of the first movement sees the repeat of a syncopated theme, subjected to frequently altering time signatures. This is repeated *ad nauseam* and with no development throughout the movement, implying the misspent energy of the Berserkers and the cultural atavism of certain football fans in present-day Scotland (see Ex. 2.2).



Ex. 2.1 MacMillan: *The Berserking*, Movement III, bb. 544-547 (piano part only)

⁵⁰ Ellis-Davidson, 1967: 100.



Ex. 2.2 MacMillan: *The Berserking*, Movement I, bb. 35-41 (piano reduction of orchestral parts only)

This piano concerto aims to establish a connection between past and present, but in an emphatically un-romanticised way, likening present-day football hooliganism to barbarians from history. This relates to the topic of nationalism which, with regard to MacMillan, is difficult to define. Writing about nationalism in *The Berserking*, he commented:

There is a great deal of scepticism and anxiety about composers who, no matter what country they are from, want to plough their own historical back garden... There may have been some nationalistic element involved in some of the early explorations of that, but it certainly wasn't the case for me: it was a purely musical exploration of the past, but with a curiosity about identity as well, which doesn't necessarily make one nationalistic.⁵¹

Nationalism is undoubtedly related to the concept of cultural retrospective modernism, not least because a tradition generally takes root in a particular place: a country has its own traditional music, traditional food and habits, and these have evolved over decades or even centuries. But MacMillan seeks to divorce tradition and nationalism from each other, praising the former but criticizing the latter. There are several reasons for this: nationalism can easily translate into xenophobia, and this is the essence of the sectarianism debate. Even though this wears the guise of a religious conflict, between Catholics and Protestants, the problem clearly stems from the tension between native Scots and Irish (Celtic) immigrants. Second, MacMillan

⁵¹ MacMillan, BBC Radio 3: 28.2.10.

is concerned with the accuracy of his country's history. To this extent, he expresses an interest in tradition, national tradition even, but not nationalism itself, for the latter term implies a strong sense of pride, and as he has made explicitly clear in numerous musical works and speeches, the composer has criticized his homeland far more frequently than he has praised it – sentiments that are far from characteristic of a nationalist.

Confusingly, Many journalists have described MacMillan as a 'Scottish Nationalist', a term which baffles the composer, as expressed in his 'Unthinking Dogma' article for *The Spectator*.⁵² However, such a description is not entirely unqualified. It is impossible to deny the distinctly 'Scottish' accent in almost every piece MacMillan writes, expressed most frequently and explicitly through the employment of Celtic ornaments imitating the *Piobaireachd* (or *pibroch*) style of bagpipers. The use of Scottish musical vernaculars in MacMillan's music has been explored at length by Stephen Kingsbury in his 2003 PhD thesis, and does not need to be repeated in full here. Kingsbury mentions the distinctively 'Scottish' features in MacMillan's music, including the use of harmonic drones⁵³, the archetypal Scottish rhythms of the 'strathspey' and the Scotch snap⁵⁴, and the keening or lament of slow-moving glissandi in the strings.⁵⁵ However the most distinct of all these features is the *pibroch* style, and this is no doubt the cause for many music journalists' misconceptions regarding MacMillan's relationship to his home country. MacMillan himself describes *pibroch* as: "a form of bagpipe playing that has a lot of florid ornamentation punctuating the line... If I look at my music objectively I can see the Celtic influence: a solid line punctuated by little flurries of ornaments".⁵⁶

⁵² MacMillan, *The Spectator*, 30.1.08.

⁵³ Kingsbury, 2003: 189.

⁵⁴ Kingsbury, 2003: 197.

⁵⁵ Kingsbury, 2003: 203.

⁵⁶ MacMillan, quoted in Ratcliffe, 1999: 40.

and Mary, Queen of Scots. Another key aspect of MacMillan's 'Scottishness' is the frequent inclusion of Scottish dance music, especially the Reel, which is evident in a plethora of works: *Into the Ferment* (movement III); *Britannia*; Piano Concerto No. 2 (movement III); *Stomp (with Fate and Elvira)*; the chorus 'God, bless us all', from Act I, scene 4 in *The Sacrifice*; *Cumnock Fair*; *From Ayrshire* (movement II); and the Violin Concerto (movements I and III).

This seemingly paradoxical tension between Scottish nationalism and criticism is rooted in the great value MacMillan places upon history and tradition. One of his most frequently used phrases, which occurs in almost every interview he gives, is the concept of 'tapping into a reservoir of tradition'. The relationship between past and present is paramount to MacMillan, and in particular the relationship between past and present in his homeland. The confusion surrounding MacMillan's relationship to Scotland lies in his dual perspective of the country and its history. Inevitably, this encompasses both positive and negative aspects of the culture, an aspect he was embracing while still a student, for in the accompanying notes to his Piano Sonata, submitted as part of his PhD, MacMillan admits that although the sonata contains no elements of actual Celtic traditional music, it nevertheless sprung from what he perceives to be Scotland's "wide cultural reservoir of the expression of grief".⁵⁸ This idea of 'a cultural reservoir', used by the student MacMillan in 1985, has remained a favourite phrase of the composer and was still frequently in use by 2010.

For his Piano Sonata, MacMillan took his inspiration from contemporary Scottish poets, ranging from Edwin Muir's evocation of bleak and icy beauty in *Scotland's Winter*, to the angry reflections on the ravaging bareness of Calvinism on Scottish culture and national character in Iain Crichton Smith's *John Knox*, to the lamenting voice of Hamish Henderson's *First Elegy for the Dead of Cyrenica*.⁵⁹ MacMillan

⁵⁸ MacMillan, 1987: 45.

⁵⁹ MacMillan, 1987: 45.

includes some of the most important lines of these poems in his commentary for the sonata, such as the following, taken from *John Knox*: “The bells are jangled in St Andrew’s town – A thunderous God tolls from a northern sky. A peasant’s scythe rings church bells from the stone”.⁶⁰

In 2009, MacMillan’s music was celebrated at a Wigmore Hall Study Day⁶¹, where one of the works performed was the Piano Sonata. Present at this event was the composer John Casken, MacMillan’s supervisor at Durham University, and therefore someone who had a unique insight into this and the other works his pupil submitted for his PhD. Casken mentioned MacMillan’s love of bells in his piano music, and the Piano Sonata reveals the first instance of such a feature, in this case, a literal, musical representation of several lines from Crichton Smith’s poem. This is also found in *Cumnock Fair*:



Ex. 2.4 MacMillan: *Cumnock Fair*, bb. 100-2

These aggressive bells suggest a bitter, uncompromising lament for Scotland’s bloody past and the casualties of the Reformation: funereal bells charged with pity, regret and anger.

Six years after his brief Piano Sonata, MacMillan expressed his concern for political tensions in Scotland on a larger scale with his *Sinfonietta* (1991). Although this is one of the very few works in his oeuvre to contain no programmatic/extramusical title, its musical content exposes its political message explicitly. Extremity of emotion and polystylistic characteristics are evident in abundance throughout this twenty-minute, single-movement work. From the opening, the

⁶⁰ Crichton Smith, quoted in MacMillan, 1987: 58.

⁶¹ Wigmore Hall, London. 10.5.09.

music suggests a sense of serenity with a solo soprano saxophone and clarinet, supported by harp, piano and strings, all *pianissimo*. Even when the strings change from their slow-moving minims and semibreves to the quintessentially MacMillanesque semiquaver string-crossings at bar 34, the tranquillity remains undisturbed. This calm scene is then brutally invaded at bar 82 by a terrifying, *subito fortississimo* chord from the brass, coupled with a militaristic snare drum roll. The juxtaposition of this entry could not be more extreme: the scoring, tempo and dynamic all change at this bar, and suddenly the nature of the music has altered significantly, from placid contemplation to fear and terror.

Taking this juxtaposition alone to claim *Sinfonietta* is representative of a beautiful, peaceful Scotland torn apart by the aggression of bigotry is somewhat tenuous, but the clearly identifiable quotation MacMillan includes later in the work confirms such a programmatic interpretation. MacMillan's use of pre-existing musical material ranges from being naturally integrated into the texture of a piece to being presented in sharp stylistic contradiction to the context it inhabits, often for ironic effect. The latter is amply demonstrated in *Sinfonietta*, where MacMillan quotes the famous Protestant anthem sung at Orange marches, *The Sash my Father wore*:

Sure I'm an Ulster Orange-man From Erin's isle I

came, To see my British brethren, All of honour and of

fame, And to tell them of my forefathers, who fought in days of

yore, That I might have the right to wear the sash my father wore.

Ex. 2.5 *The Sash My Father Wore* (Loyalist anthem - first verse)

Ex. 2.6 MacMillan: *Sinfonietta*, bb. 174-178 (piccolo, cor anglais, E flat clarinet, soprano saxophone, trumpet and trombone parts only)

MacMillan's treatment of the theme, aping (mocking) the wind band that would traditionally perform at Orange marches, makes this disjunct musical episode stand out in a deliberately grotesque manner - indeed, the composer indicates 'grotesque, military' in the score. This type of bitterly ironic quotation of an anthem reveals parallels with earlier twentieth-century models, such as Bartók's *Kossuth*, a tone-poem based on life of Lajos Kossuth, leader of the unsuccessful Hungarian uprising against Austria in 1848-9. Like MacMillan, Bartók ironically includes an anthem whose symbolism repulses him, the Austrian national anthem. Although the stylistic distinction is less emphasised, there is a similarly mocking tone, evident in the use of a minor key and the off-beat quavers in the contrabassoon part:

Ex. 2.7 Bartók: *Kossuth*, bb. 296-300 (second and third bassoon and contrabassoon parts only)

In both these examples, the composers take a musical representation of the strong, confident character of a country's nationality and transform it into something ugly and sinister. For Bartók, this reflected the Austrian victory and dominance; for MacMillan, the fervour of anti-Catholic Orangemen during their marches in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

These Catholic-Protestant tensions had been explored in another orchestral work by MacMillan one year previously, when the composer's reflection on Calvinism in Scotland manifested itself in one of his most popular works, *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*. This orchestral tone poem takes as its extramusical subject the figure of Isobel Gowdie, a seventeenth-century Scottish woman who was burned at the stake in 1662 on the charge of witchcraft, after signing a confession in which she admitted several accusations, which included engaging in sexual intercourse with the devil.

John Knox, the subject of Crichton Smith's eponymous poem, was one of the major Presbyterian figures in the Reformation in Scotland⁶² and was significantly involved in the witch-hunts of that time. While in Scotland this was primarily a Protestant business⁶³, MacMillan points out that his Catholic ancestors abroad were also guilty of such crimes: in the years between 1560 and 1707 as many as 4,500 Scots perished because their contemporaries thought they were witches, and this occurred in Catholic and Protestant Europe.⁶⁴ This is a significant admission, for since the extramusical subject of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* concerns an event in Scottish history, MacMillan could have easily ignored the similar Catholic practices in other parts of Europe. In other words, this should not be interpreted as an attack against Protestants, even though it relates to the issue of Protestant-Catholic sectarianism.

⁶² Presbyterianism refers to a number of different Christian churches adhering to the Calvinist theological tradition within Protestantism.

⁶³ Goodare, 2002: 5.

⁶⁴ MacMillan, 1990 <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-The-Confession-of-Isobel-Gowdie/3115>>

MacMillan has said he attempted to “evoke the soul of Scotland” through the inclusion of chants, songs, litanies – both real and imagined – folk material, Gregorian chant from the Requiem Mass.⁶⁵ This Scottish flavour is found in the very opening notes of the work with a quintessentially Scottish musical device: a drone.

The image shows a musical score for the opening of MacMillan's 'The Confession of Isobel Gowdie'. The score is written for a woodwind ensemble and includes parts for Clarinet 1 (Cl. 1), Clarinet 2 (Cl. 2), Bassoon 2 (Bsn. 2), Bassoon 1 (Bsn. 1), and Horns (Horn 1, 2, 3, 4). The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/2. The music begins with a drone of two notes, C and D, played by the Clarinets and Bassoons. The Bassoon 1 part features a triplet of eighth notes. The Horns enter with a single note, C, in the third measure. The score is marked with 'pp' (pianissimo) and 'sempre semplice'.

Ex. 2.8 MacMillan: *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, bb. 1-3

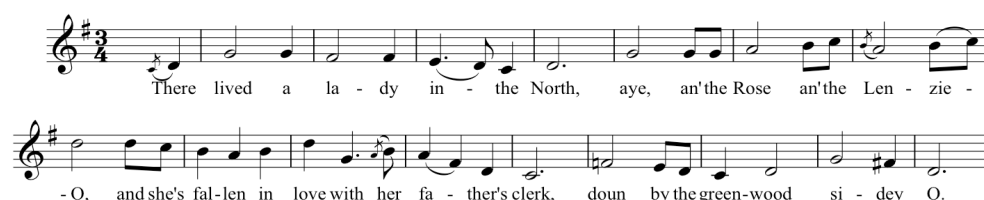
In addition to acting as a drone, these two notes (C and D) also form the first two of five notes explored at the opening: C-D-G-F#-A. MacMillan says that although some other notes ‘creep in’, this pentatonic figure is a deliberate reflection of the modality found in much Irish and Scottish folk music.⁶⁶ It is the F#, the only ‘black’ note of the group, that sets up an element of tension with the surrounding notes, such that there is an ambiguity as to whether it will rise back to a G or fall to a D.⁶⁷ Raymond Monelle has identified the first four of these notes (C-D-G-F#) as the beginning of a quotation from the folk song ‘The Cruel Mother’, which is heard in a more extended quotation in the second clarinet part in bars

⁶⁵ *Discovering Music: MacMillan's 'The Confession of Isobel Gowdie.'* MacMillan in interview with Stephen Johnson. BBC Radio 3: 28.2.10.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

23-5.⁶⁸ While Bronson has listed fifty-six versions of this tune, the version used by MacMillan is that sung by Heather Heywood, who assured Monelle that she had learned the song orally, and therefore its provenance would be very hard to discover.⁶⁹ It is worth noting that Heather Heywood appears on MacMillan's 1996 'Private Passions' list for Radio 3 (see Appendix B).



Ex. 2.9 *The Cruel Mother* (folk song)

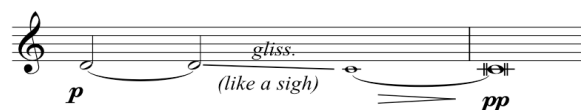


Ex. 2.10 MacMillan: *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, bb. 23-5 (clarinet parts only)

This lamenting Requiem of the opening is subjected to a sudden change of mood at letter D (b. 65), indicated by a change of mode and an increased sense of chromaticism. The pitches in the mode up to this point have been C-D-F#-G-A, but from Letter D, the notes B flat and F become dominant. The keening 'sighs' of the violas and cellos have now been inverted, so that they rise a semitone, and are placed relatively high in the first violin register, transforming a lamenting gesture into an effect of heightened tension. Whereas for the earlier, falling glissando strings MacMillan indicates in the score "(like a sigh)", the inversion of this simple gesture conveys the opposite effect, "(like a scream)", for the rising, semitonal glissando figures:

⁶⁸ Monelle, 1997: 103

⁶⁹ Ibid.



Ex. 2.11 MacMillan: *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, bb. 61-62 (first violin part only)



Ex. 2.12 MacMillan: *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, bb. 69-70 (first violin part only)

However, neither MacMillan nor Monelle (nor any other musicologist) has discussed the continuation of the melody of *The Cruel Mother* in this new section at Letter D. While the opening of the piece centred around just the first four pitches of the song four pitches (C-D-G-F#), at Letter E (b. 80), the melody is presented more fully in the four horn parts but 'stretched out' over more than thirty bars (until bar 111), so that it becomes aurally unrecognisable. The horns play the first three phrases of the song (up until the low C on the word "clerk" in the original song, see Ex. 2.9), and just as the new section at Letter D began with a sustained C being cut off by an abrupt, staccato B flat in b. 65, so too do the horns cut off in an identical way in b. 112, which marks the beginning of Letter G. At this point, the trumpets take over the melody, to provide the song's final phrase (beginning on the F of the word "down" in the song)

Ex. 2.13 MacMillan: *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, bb. 111-113 (horn and trumpet parts only)

They continue until b. 126 and almost complete their sole phrase (“doun by the greenwood Sidey O”), but fail to produce the final F#-D. Instead, the strings join them with their G in b. 126 and crescendo into thirteen aggressive strokes from the full orchestra. The number of these chords represents the demonic coven Isobel Gowdie confessed to being a member of, which had thirteen members. However, MacMillan points out the alternative significance of this number, which had positive, sacramental associations in Europe at the time of the Reformation.⁷⁰ The sacrificial aspect of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* invites parallels with Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*, which also concludes with a solitary, female sacrifice. The use of national folk melodies also strengthens the relationship between the two works, especially since they both open quietly, meditating on just the first five notes of the respective folk-songs (C-B-G-E-A in the Stravinsky; (C-D-G-F#-A in the MacMillan).

In addition to Stravinsky, Louis Andriessen’s influence is clearly evident in *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*. In bar 142 MacMillan hints at a specific technique he admired in the work of Andriessen: hocketing. Hockets were introduced in the medieval period, and the definitions and descriptions of early hockets are numerous, since they vary according to what type of hocket is used and what constitutes its purpose. The technique originally served to facilitate the continuity of melody between two or more singers. It has been described as “the dovetailing of sounds and silences by means of the staggered arrangement of rests; a ‘mutual stop-and-go device’”⁷¹ Andriessen revived this ancient technique in many of his works, most notably, *Hoketus*, where two groups situated as far apart as possible from each other play each part (group one playing the notes with the stems

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ F.Ll. Harrison in *Oxford Music Online*:

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13115?q=dovetailing&search=quick&pos=15&_start=1#firsthit>

pointing up, group two playing the notes with the stems pointing down):



Ex. 2.14 Andriessen: *Hoketus*, bb. 54-57

Even where the hocketed notes occur immediately after each other, the distance between the two groups makes any sense of legato impossible. However MacMillan, who claimed to be fascinated by Andriessen and specifically by his hocketing effects⁷², strives for a more legato approach in his orchestral tone poem. This begins at Letter I (b. 145), with the various instruments ‘handing over’ musical material to other instruments and then ‘taking over’ from them several bars later:

Ex. 2.15 MacMillan: *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, bb. 147-152 (violin parts only)

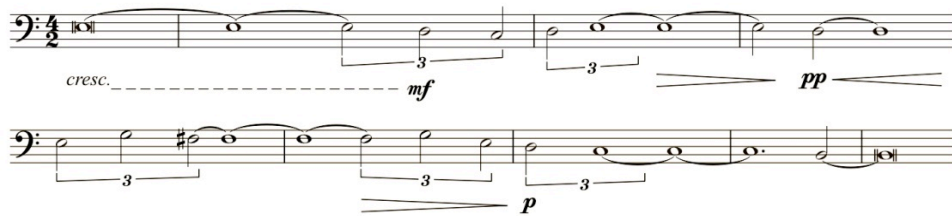
These parallels with Stravinsky and Andriessen reveal a double retrospection, for MacMillan is looking back to these modernists who in turn looked back – to the medieval period and ancient folk traditions. This strand of retrospective modernism, which explores both the recent

⁷² MacMillan, 1990 < <http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Sowetan-Spring/2892> >

and distant past, is evident elsewhere in the piece, such as the ancient retrospection to the *Lux aeterna* plainchant, which can be seen, though barely heard, in bb. 26-33:



Ex. 2.16 *Lux aeterna* plainchant



Ex. 2.17 MacMillan: *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, bb. 26-33 (lower double bass part only)

This occurs again later as a brass chorale in the trombones and tuba (bb. 80-86), and MacMillan used this plainchant again much more prominently in a motet, specifically the opening bars of the alto part of the Strathclyde Motet, *Lux aeterna* (2008).

In contrast to this, there are several examples of very recent self-retrospection, where MacMillan looks back to earlier works of his own and alludes to these. At b. 328, for example, the misdirected energy of *The Berserking* makes an appropriate appearance, commenting upon the ill-spent effort and alarming enthusiasm with which people sought to rid their country of so-called witches, expressed in repeated *tenuto* or accented quavers:



Ex. 2.18 MacMillan: *The Berserking*, bb. 296-299 (piano reduction of orchestral parts only)



Ex. 2.19 MacMillan: *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, bb. 167-168 (violin I and II parts only)

In his PhD thesis of 2000, Timothy Rolls claims that in *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* MacMillan also recycled another work: the early, unpublished early choral piece, *Beatus Vir*.⁷³ However, there are a number of reasons why this claim should be treated with caution: first, Rolls provides no musical example of either the original or how it appears in the context of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, nor does he give the relevant bar numbers; second, the composer himself has denied its use in *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*;⁷⁴ and finally, since *Beatus Vir* has been neither recorded nor published, the quotation of this work in *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* is impossible to verify.

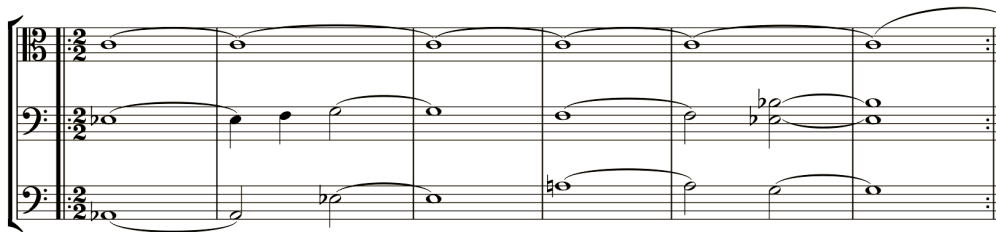
Finally, it is worth noting that the return to the opening, lamenting section at the end of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* is prefaced by a passage whose origin has hitherto been left unmentioned by both musicologists and MacMillan himself. The reference to the conclusion of *...as others see us...* at Letter U in *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* is subtle but unambiguous. Comprising three notes ascending and descending Eb-F-G-F-Eb), MacMillan uses this phrase, heard repeatedly and fading into silence at the end of *...as others see us...*, and repeats it several times - at the very same pitch and set to a dotted rhythm - in bars 369-370 of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*:

⁷³ Rolls, 2000: 43.

⁷⁴ MacMillan, via email, 13.3.10.



Ex. 2.20 MacMillan: *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, bb. 368-370



Ex. 2.21 MacMillan: *...as others see us...*, Movement VI, bb. 127-131

This brief material appears at the very end of the final movement of *...as others see us...*, which refers the portrait of Dorothy Hodgkin (see final picture in Appendix D). Not only is Hodgkin the only woman in the group of seven portraits MacMillan set to music, but the very title of the piece, taken from Robert Burns, is very apt for *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, emphasizing the manner in which “others saw her”. The composer explained that he had to see her in a certain way to express himself in the music:

Something needed to happen to allow me to see into this story from a different angle – something that allowed me to take a position of solidarity, and even a kind of retrospective compassion with the woman at the centre of this story, who suffered so much... I wanted to say, on behalf of my compatriots who did these terrible things to

Isobel Gowdie, I'm sorry for the persecution and the terror
and the evil that was visited on her.⁷⁵

MacMillan's attempt for forgiveness are emphasised in the work's form. It might be argued that its ternary form simply represents another example of MacMillan's retrospection to musical tradition, specifically the *da capo* aria and its derivations. However, the extramusical implications of this rhetorical form are significant. The tone poem opens and closes with drones, but of a different nature: it starts with a *pianissimo* dissonance (C and D) and finishes with a *fortississississimo* unison C. The first attempt at this full orchestral unison C is made early in the piece, in bb. 61-4, but this is cut off abruptly by the accented B flats that appear at the start of b. 65 (and similarly at b. 112 – see Ex. 2.13). Before reaching the resolution MacMillan seeks – the “retrospective compassion” to atone for his ancestors' wrongdoings – the emotional wound must first be sterilised in the work's violent central section. Subsequently, it is only after the middle section that the second attempt at healing or resolution can be made, this time with greater success. Twenty-seven bars from the opening section are repeated at the end of the piece: bb. 387-414 are exactly the same as bb. 34-61. In this second attempt, no B flats thwart the unison C, which begins quietly and gradually increases in volume (through both crescendos and terraced dynamics) over the penultimate eleven bars of the work, with a final, silent bar – a silent prayer perhaps – after which appears the Latin inscription ‘miserere nobis’ (‘have mercy on us’).

The ternary form of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, as well as the inclusion of plainchant and a Scottish folk-song, looks back several centuries. Twentieth-century models are also invoked: the extramusical subject and use of folk melodies has much in common with *The Rite of Spring*; the considerable extent of hocketing in the middle section is clearly borrowed from Andriessen; and references to MacMillan's own

⁷⁵ *Discovering Music: MacMillan's 'The Confession of Isobel Gowdie.'* MacMillan in interview with Stephen Johnson. BBC Radio 3: 28.2.10.

works (including allusions to his minimalist-inspired *The Berserking*) indicate a sense of self-retrospection. These all demonstrate MacMillan's retrospective modernism on a musical level. However, the work also expresses his central concern of the relationship between the past and the present in Scotland. As with his Liberation Theology works, which interpreted ancient texts in such a way as to draw parallels with modern concerns in Latin America, MacMillan's works relating to the conflicts in Scotland portray a type of cultural retrospective modernism. As mentioned above, the essence of this approach is the belief that modern problems require historical retrospection, which in the case of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* MacMillan directs towards a single woman as a symbol of social unrest. As the composer himself said about the topic for the work: "It was the universality and timelessness of the inhumanity in that story that I was interested in because it seems to resonate with our own times."⁷⁶ The final, unison, consonant C at the conclusion reveals a confident belief that by accepting the past, a sense of reconciliation and resolution might be achieved. It is arguably the most pronounced musical precursor to his controversial speech nine years later.

Scotland's Shame in Music II: Post-'Scotland's Shame'

Soon after he delivered 'Scotland's Shame', MacMillan wrote several more Scottish-centred musical critiques. In 1999 (the same year as the speech) he composed *Cumnock Fair*, and later the composer revealed that he originally intended to call this *Hoodicrow Peden*, the nickname of Alexander Peden. Peden was one of the most significant leaders of the Covenanters, supporters of the National Covenant drawn up in February 1638 against the attempt by King Charles I and Archbishop Laud to impose a new liturgy and prayer book upon the Church of

⁷⁶ MacMillan in Johnson and Sutton, 1997: 28.

Scotland. The nickname of Hoodicrow Peden appears in Edwin Muir's poem *Scotland, 1941*:

We were a tribe, a family, a people.
Wallace and Bruce guard now a painted field,
And all may read the folio of our fable,
Peruse the sword, the sceptre and the shield.
A simple sky roofed in that rustic day,
The busy corn-fields and the haunted holms,
The green road winding up the ferny brae.
But Knox and Melville clapped their preaching palms
And bundled all the harvesters away,
Hoodicrow Peden in the blighted corn
Hacked with his rusty beak the starving haulms.
Out of that desolation we were born.

Muir's poem portrays Calvinism and the Covenanters as the main perpetrators of Scotland's divorce from its history, impoverishing it culturally. It is easy to see why such a poem appealed to MacMillan, who shares its sentiments strongly. The famous reference to Burns and Scott as "sham bards of a sham nation" was not an attack on these authors themselves: Muir was lamenting the state of mindlessness that appointed two dead men its exclusive 'prophets', and which selected passages from their poetry as mottos to live by.⁷⁷

Although originally conceived as a single movement for piano and orchestra or string ensemble, *Cumnock Fair* was subsequently used as the first movement of MacMillan's Piano Concerto No. 2. All three movements of this concerto, written 'In memoriam Edwin Muir', refer to the first verse of Muir's poem: I. Cumnock Fair (with its allusions to Peden); II. shambards; and III. shamnation. MacMillan refers to the 'sham bards' of Burns and Scott by including musical references to each literary figure. Scott famously wrote *The Bride of Lammermoor*, and therefore MacMillan quotes the waltz from the 'mad scene' of Donizetti's opera, *Lucia di Lammermoor*:

⁷⁷ Calder, 2006: 282.



Ex. 2.22 Donizetti: *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Act III, Scene 2, Aria "Spargi d'amaro pianto", bb. 16-20 (voice and piano reduction)



Ex. 2.23 MacMillan: *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Movement II, bb. 31-4

Burns is represented by the inclusion of a folk tune, *A Parcel o' Rogues in a Nation*, whose text (but not music) was written by Burns (see Exx. 2.24 and 2.25).

In the same year that he was revising the Second Piano Concerto (2003), MacMillan started his organ concerto, *A Scotch Bestiary*. The composer's own programme note reveals that its structure is based on the tradition of musical portraiture set by Elgar, Saint-Saëns and Mussorgsky,⁷⁸ and its subtitle of 'Enigmatic Variations on a Zoological Carnival at a Caledonian Exhibition' refers to these three composers respectively. The reference to Saint-Saëns is perhaps the most obvious, since his *Carnival of the Animals* is an immediate point of comparison given the common extramusical subject of animals. The Mussorgskian element manifests itself in a recurring theme, as in

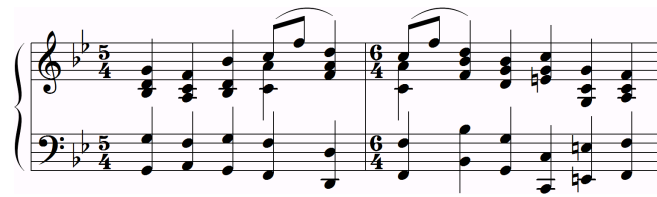
⁷⁸ MacMillan, 2004: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-A-Scotch-Bestiary/15163>>

Ex. 2.24 MacMillan: *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Movement II, bb. 44-8

Ex. 2.25 *A Parcel o' Rogues in a Nation* (folk song)

Pictures at an Exhibition, where the 'Promenade' theme is heard at various sections throughout, representing the journey from one painting to the next. MacMillan takes the rhythm of Mussorgsky's Promenade theme and assigns it to a quintessentially Scottish folk song, once again using *A Parcel o' Rogues in a Nation* (also used in the Second

Piano Concerto, see Exx. 2.22 and 2.23). This Russian-Scottish hybrid is evident immediately after the work's opening, thunderous chord:



Ex. 2.26 Mussorgsky: 'Promenade' theme from *Pictures at an Exhibition*



Ex. 2.27 MacMillan: *A Scotch Bestiary*, Part I, Movement I, bb. 2-3 (organ part only)

This is the theme upon which the variations in each of the subsequent movements are based.⁷⁹ In its first statement, which opens the concerto, we see not only the influence of Mussorgsky and Scottish folk music but also the polytonality of twentieth-century modernists such as Stravinsky and Ives. This is evident from the opening chords: an A major chord in the right hand against a coloured (added F#) C-centred chord in the left; followed by a B flat major chord in the left against a C major chord in the right; then an E flat major chord in the left jarring against a D major chord in the right, and so on. Underneath this, in the pedal part, MacMillan looks back to the twelve-tone system of Schoenberg by including a complete tone-row (because there are thirteen notes in this first bar, one pitch is doubled: the second note, D flat, reappears enharmonically as C# in the tenth note of the bar). MacMillan clearly wishes to emphasise the juxtaposition of the Russian

⁷⁹ It should be noted that MacMillan had responded to Mussorgsky's iconic piece more than a decade earlier, where he wrote his own 'pictures at an exhibition' in the aforementioned *...as others see us...* This comprises six movements for chamber orchestra, responding to seven portraits in the National Portrait Gallery (see Appendix D).

and Scottish elements by placing them in different keys, simultaneously demonstrating how he has been influenced by some of the major figures of the twentieth century, and providing an explicit example of his musical retrospective modernism.⁸⁰

The Elgar reference – to the *Enigma Variations* – lies in the work's portrayal of prominent human figures in Scottish life. Unlike Elgar's variations however, MacMillan's representations are far from flattering, for the characters he chose are all either directly or indirectly related to the sectarianism in Scotland debate. He admitted that because the first performance took place in the new Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, he was motivated by the great American cartoon makers who represented human characters in animal form, and subsequently *A Scotch Bestiary* was inspired by human archetypes and personalities encountered in Scottish life over the years.⁸¹ MacMillan's piece is also dissimilar to Elgar's in that the characters of these musical portraits are left anonymous. There are eight portraits in total, all included in Part I of the concerto's two parts. Some of these portraits refer to specific characters, while others portray certain social groups. The first is 'Ode to a cro-magnon hyena', whose title offers two clues. The first word, 'ode', might be interpreted as the initials 'O.D.E.', and one of the most fervent attacks on MacMillan's 1999 speech came from Owen Dudley Edwards. Secondly, in the attacking article (for *Scottish Affairs*, 2000, in which MacMillan is accused of being a neo-fascist and giving succour to the IRA⁸²), Edwards refers to the first five authors who contribute to the book *Scotland's Shame?* as "Cromagnon Catholics",⁸³ hence MacMillan's reference to a 'cro-magnon hyena'.

The second character-portrait is less specific. 'Reptiles and Big Fish (in a small pond)' might be interpreted as the Scottish political and

⁸⁰ This is by no means an isolated example of a tone-row in MacMillan's music. Consider, for example, the piano part in the opening of 'Shifting Sands', the second piece in *Northern Skies*, a collection of seven pieces for piano and intermediate-level cello.

⁸¹ MacMillan, 2004: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-A-Scotch-Bestiary/15163>>

⁸² Edwards, 2000: 9-10.

⁸³ Edwards, 2000: 22.

media classes. The fact that the plural is used suggests social groups rather than specific figures. However, the next movement is far less ambiguous, not least because it is one of two movements that the composer himself revealed to journalist Damian Thomson. ‘Her Serene and Ubiquitous Majesty, Queen Bee’ reflects Scottish television journalist and presenter of BBC Two’s *Newsnight*, Kirsty Wark.⁸⁴ The year after he completed *A Scotch Bestiary*, MacMillan wrote an article in *The Scotsman* where he questions Wark’s ability to present news objectively, in particular focusing on her publicly voiced opposition to Catholic schools at a headteachers’ dinner.⁸⁵ It is unsurprising that MacMillan should react strongly to this, given his concern for the maintenance of Catholic schools, discussed in the previous sub-chapter. While there are many figures MacMillan might have attacked with reference to this issue, especially Steve Bruce, Wark is by far the most publicly known, and therefore her comments reach the widest audience. In this Queen Bee movement, MacMillan re-uses the same reel by John French heard prominently and repetitively at the beginning of the Second’s Piano Concerto’s third movement. In this new context however, the theme is subjected to not only greater ornamentation, but also a greater degree of chromaticism, such that the strong tonic-dominant (B-F#) relationship at the beginning becomes a sinister tritone (F#-C), and the entire jig becomes grotesque:



Ex. 2.28 MacMillan: Piano Concerto No. 2, Movement III, bb. 1-4 (solo violin part only)



Ex. 2.29 MacMillan: *A Scotch Bestiary*, Movement III, bb. 115-8 (solo violin part only)

⁸⁴ Thomson, *The Spectator*, 4.12.10: <http://www.spectator.co.uk/arts-and-culture/featured/6507278/part_2/macmillans-loyalty-.html>

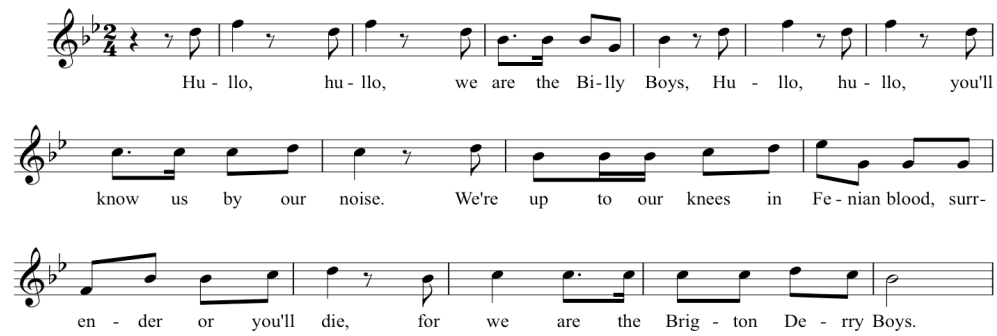
⁸⁵ MacMillan, *The Scotsman*, 6.2.05: <<http://news.scotsman.com/comment/Dangers-of-Warks-whinge.2600927.jp>>

The fourth movement is more obvious than its predecessor: 'The red-handed, no surrender howler monkey'. This is a clear reference to the Loyalist 'Red Hand',⁸⁶ and is not to be confused with 'Red Hand Day' or the 'Red Hand Campaign', which, since 2002, have sought to draw attention to and prevent the employment of child soldiers. The Red Hand has become a symbol for Orange Protestantism and anti-Catholicism in both Northern Ireland and Scotland. The Red Hand Commando (RHC) is a small Loyalist paramilitary group in Northern Ireland which is closely linked to the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), and although carrying the RHC flag at Orange parades is against the rules of the Orange institution, these have been seen during Orange marches.⁸⁷ Furthermore, one of the most common slogans of the Orange order is 'no surrender'. This fourth movement of *A Scotch Bestiary* subtly quotes the Loyalist anthem often heard chanted at Celtic-Rangers football matches in Scotland, *We are the Billy Boys*. One of the verses also refers to the Loyalist Sash: "At the sound of William they will stand to fight the Fenian⁸⁸ foe. We'll walk the streets each way tonight, surrender is our prize; to wear the sash my father wore, to be a Billy Boy." The movement begins with a military-sounding snare drum and bass drum, and the tempo gradually accelerates into a 'Tempo di marcia' at bar 179. It is appropriate that the melody begins with a rising minor third, D-F, which, as with 'O.D.E.' is surely a reference to Donald Findlay:

⁸⁶ Steve Bruce has written a book on the sectarian issues in Northern Ireland which uses this image in its title: Bruce, 1992. *The Red Hand: Loyalist Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁸⁷ Bryan, 2000: 128-9.

⁸⁸ The Fenians, both the Fenian Brotherhood and the Irish Republican brotherhood (IRB), were fraternal organisations dedicated to the establishment of an independent Irish republic in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The name "Fenians" was first applied by John O'Mahony to the members of the Irish republican group he founded in America. The contemporary meaning of the term 'Fenian' has expanded to include all supporters of Irish nationalism, as well as being used as a sectarian term for both Irish and Scottish Catholics.



Ex. 2.30 *We are the Billy Boys* (Loyalist anthem)



Ex. 2.31 MacMillan: *A Scotch Bestiary*, Part I, Movement IV, bb. 190-2 (horn parts only)

After this comes the only musical statement of the line “we are the Billy Boys”, played loudly by the brass and shrill woodwind, the latter recalling the quotation of *The Sash* in *Sinfonietta*, discussed above:



Ex. 2.32 MacMillan: *A Scotch Bestiary*, Part I, b. 194 (flute, piccolo, oboe, cor anglais and clarinet parts only)

The next movement, ‘Uncle Tom Cat and his Chickens’ is perhaps the most apparent of all the characterisations: Tom Devine and head-in-the-sand Catholics, terrified of MacMillan’s opening of a religious-

political wound. This begins with an explicit misquotation of the ‘Cat’ theme in Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf*:



Ex. 2.33 MacMillan: *A Scotch Bestiary*, Part I, bb. 210-3, (bass clarinet part only)

This is followed by ‘Scottish Patriots’, which is more difficult to define, and presumably refers to general Scottish life. It is in this movement that the now discarded Scottish Parliament fanfare is quoted.

The second of the composer’s own revelations concerns the penultimate movement of Part I: ‘The Reverend Cuckoo and his parroting Chorus’, a depiction of Bishop Richard Holloway and his sycophants.⁸⁹ The bluesy flattened seventh in the final note of the first

Ex. 2.34 MacMillan: *A Scotch Bestiary*, Part I, bb. 299-303 (excluding woodwind parts)

⁸⁹ Thomson, *The Spectator*, 4.12.10: <http://www.spectator.co.uk/arts-and-culture/featured/6507278/part_2/macmillans-loyalty-.html>

trombone part at the end of this movement is juxtaposed with the plagal cadence of the sung “Amen” by members of the orchestra (see Ex. 2.34). This is unmistakably reminiscent of cartoon humour, which is exactly what MacMillan intended: “That movement’s ending is supposed to be a sort of ‘that’s all folks!’ moment. It’s all just cartoon music really.”⁹⁰

The final movement of Part I, ‘Jackass Hackass’, is slightly more cryptic. The inclusion of typewriters into the orchestral texture provides a clue, as well as the term ‘hack’. Before it became more commonly applied to illegally accessing information from computers, a ‘hack’ was a colloquial and usually pejorative term for a journalist who is paid to write low-quality articles, often within a short deadline. It is therefore more than reasonable to assume that this movement is aimed at the Scottish press, with whom MacMillan has had a tempestuous relationship ever since he explicitly attacked them for their subjectivity and anti-Catholic stance in his ‘Scotland’s Shame’ speech.

As well as acting as his most profound musical statement about Scotland and some of its inhabitants, *A Scotch Bestiary* is one of the clearest works in which MacMillan’s musical (as well as cultural) retrospective modernism is made apparent. The references to other composers are numerous, including explicit allusions to Wagner and Prokofiev. The techniques of modernist composers - such as twelve-tone music and polytonality - are also made apparent. These composers, of different nationalities and from different historical periods, represent MacMillan’s menagerie of animals, and reveal the fundamental importance of retrospection in his work – both recent and further back throughout musical history.

⁹⁰ In conversation with the composer, 2.2.11.

Conclusion: Scotland's Shame, Scotland's Pride?

Despite MacMillan's numerous public criticisms of Scotland, both in speeches and in musical works such as *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, *Sinfonietta*, and perhaps most explicitly of all in *A Scotch Bestiary* and Piano Concerto No. 2, the vast majority of his music incorporates a quintessentially Scottish-sounding tradition; indeed, this is what makes his music so instantly identifiable. Such sincere incorporation of Scottish music therefore seems paradoxical when considered in relation to the composer's stance toward Scotland: why is his music infused with such distinctively Scottish characteristics if the composer is deeply critical of his country, both its historical and contemporary states?

The reason for this relates to issues of nationalism and faith. As a Catholic, the significance of tradition is central to MacMillan's religious belief. This includes the acceptance of historical tradition with all its imperfections, as well as its triumphs. Even though he is often retrospective, MacMillan is seldom nostalgic, embracing aspects of history and contemporary life of which he is both proud and ashamed. The references to *A Parcel o' Rogues in a Nation* in *A Scotch Bestiary* and Piano Concerto No. 2 reveal a lament for a loss of nationhood, while the burning of Isobel Gowdie and the riots of *The Berserking* look at the destructive aspects of Scottish culture. In sharp contrast to the cutting of the continuous thread that some of the 'high modernists' have sought, (an issue addressed in detail in Chapter Seven), MacMillan deliberately and repeatedly turns his gaze back into history with regard to both music and nationality.

The latter concerns his references to Scotland and more specifically the distinctly Scottish-sounding elements in his music. At times these elements are expressed in an unambiguously ironic and even bitter way, as in Piano Concerto No. 2 and *A Scotch Bestiary*, but in numerous other works MacMillan maintains a genuinely respectful Scottish flavour, and his attitude towards Scottish folk music is far from ironic. In 2011, I asked the composer whether it would be an exaggeration to say that this varying treatment of Scottish elements

reflected his complex relationship with his country, and whether or not the latter could be described simply as 'half-shame, half-pride', to which the composer replied, "Yes, I think that's a good way of putting it actually".⁹¹

MacMillan's attitude towards Scotland is therefore in a constant state of flux, and has been in this state since his earliest works, such as Piano Sonata. It is just as absurd to describe MacMillan as 'nationalistic' as it is to say that he feels no sense of national tradition. Indeed, it is precisely the latter that the composer attempted to unearth, albeit controversially, by examining Scotland's history and refusing the Protestant Reformation as its starting point. His music does not focus solely on the imperfections in Scotland's past. If this were the case, and MacMillan's country brought him nothing but shame, the quintessentially Scottish idiom, present in almost every work he writes, would not be evident; nor would he set the poetry of Burns and Soutar to music; nor would he even necessarily continue living in Scotland. However vehement his critique of his homeland may be, there are just as many instances in his music – indeed, far more – which demonstrate a sincerity and even a sense of national pride. The second movement of the Piano Concerto No. 2 expresses this juxtaposition perfectly, taking its title of 'shamnation' from Muir's pessimistic poem and ironically quoting the mad scene from Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Ex. 2.22), and then alternating to a beautiful elegy of the folk song 'Such a parcel o' rogues' in the sustained, blurry string writing (Ex. 2.24), lamenting the lost beauty of Scotland that resulted from the Reformation. The only accurate way of defining MacMillan's nationality is, as described above: half-proud and half-ashamed. Not only is this an interpretation the composer himself agrees with, but it is the only interpretation that makes sense of the antithetical ways in which he uses Scottish elements in his work, sometimes representing the grotesque, and at other times, the beautiful.

⁹¹ In conversation with the composer, 11.2.11.

When considered in its entirety, 'Scotland's Shame' is considerably more positive than selective media reports might suggest. While there is an inevitable degree of negative criticism, the composer constantly strives towards a solution, including his own participation in reaching such a solution: "If I have a mission I think this must involve acts of remembrance, of recollection, of rediscovery of our past, or re-animation of our heritage, of a re-awakening of our culture".⁹² It is this sense of cultural retrospection and its implications for modern Scottish culture that permeates the speech and its related musical works.

⁹² MacMillan, 2000: 14.

**Part II: Religious Retrospective Modernism:
Theology, Liturgy, and the Influence of Wagner and Bach in
MacMillan's music**

Chapter 3. MacMillan, *Tristan* and *The Ring*

While the Catholic faith has always been of great importance to MacMillan, this commitment became increasingly dominant in his music after the political motivations were gradually removed and reserved for newspaper articles. Religion is perhaps the most significant aspect in the 'retrospective' part of the description of MacMillan as 'retrospective modernist', and it is considered in Part II in relation to two composers. Music for the liturgy – both music for Good Friday and for weekly Sunday services – is addressed in conjunction with Bach. To include Wagner in a discussion of sacred music is less expected, yet just as Bach provides a model with whom to compare liturgical concerns, Wagner provides a surprisingly apt model for the theological implications of MacMillan's second opera, *The Sacrifice*.

MacMillan cites Wagner as one of his earliest musical heroes, and even wrote a piece called *Tribute to Richard Wagner* for Six Tubas and Orchestra, at the tender age of eleven.¹ This admiration extended well beyond his formative years, through his doctoral studies at Durham University and into his mature compositional language. *Tristan und Isolde* has become a work of particular significance to MacMillan, and has been quoted by the composer in works spanning several decades, from the early Piano Sonata (1985), to *Miserere* (2009). Its dramatic narrative is especially significant to *The Sacrifice* and the *St John Passion*, and both these works are discussed in detail with relation to *Tristan und Isolde* below.

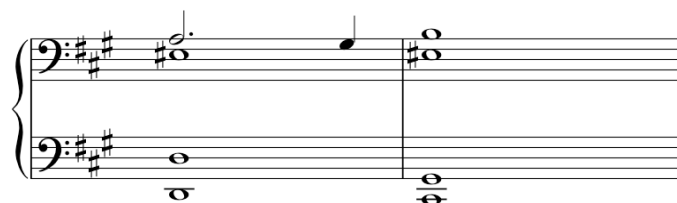
Before examining such comparisons however, it is worth briefly noting the several musical references to *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in MacMillan's music, not least because MacMillan's earliest quotation of

¹ MacMillan, 2000: 4.

Wagner's music is taken from this cycle. As mentioned above, his string quartet *Etwas zurückhaltend* was a student work that was rediscovered by the composer and subsequently published in 2008. MacMillan's programme note for the piece reveals the longevity of Wagner's impact on his music:

I realised that there was a lot in its ideas which seemed current and relevant to my recent work. The title comes from Wagner's indication for the final pages of *Götterdämmerung*, and the work reflects an ongoing interest in this composer, which has been reflected at various points since in my own work... Allusions to motifs from *The Ring* are never far away... The work ends with a tentative and tense coda, with nods still being made in the direction of *The Ring*'s final Immolation Scene.²

Written when the composer was just twenty-three years old, *Etwas zurückhaltend* is the earliest instrumental work in MacMillan's published catalogue, and only two pieces, both choral, pre-date this piece.³ The work therefore demonstrates a double-retrospection: the mature MacMillan looking back and assessing his student works; and the student MacMillan gaining inspiration from the music of Wagner. MacMillan includes references to several motifs from the *Ring*, but such quotations/allusions are relatively subtle, and often easier to see than hear. To show which motifs MacMillan uses, Robert Donington's list of the *Ring*'s motifs and the numbers and titles he assigns to them are used for the following musical examples:

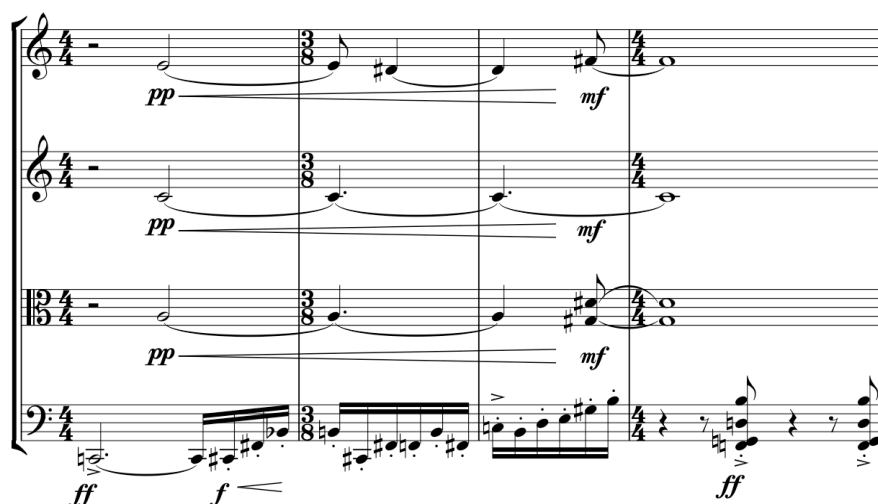


Ex. 3.1 Wagner: 'Destiny as the power to which all men must surrender' motif, No. 84⁴

² MacMillan, 2010 <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Etwas-zurueckhaltend/54180>>

³ A motet, very much in the style of Herbert Howells, called *The Lamb has come for us from the House of David* (1979); and *Missa Brevis* which, like *Etwas zurückhaltend*, is an early work which MacMillan later rediscovered, written in 1977 and published in 2007.

⁴ Donington, 1974: 303.



Ex. 3.2 MacMillan: *Etwas zurückhaltend*, bb. 194-7



Ex. 3.3 Wagner: 'Loge as the ambivalence of primal energy' motif, No. 21⁵



Ex. 3.4 MacMillan: *Etwas zurückhaltend*, bb. 116-8 (cello part only)

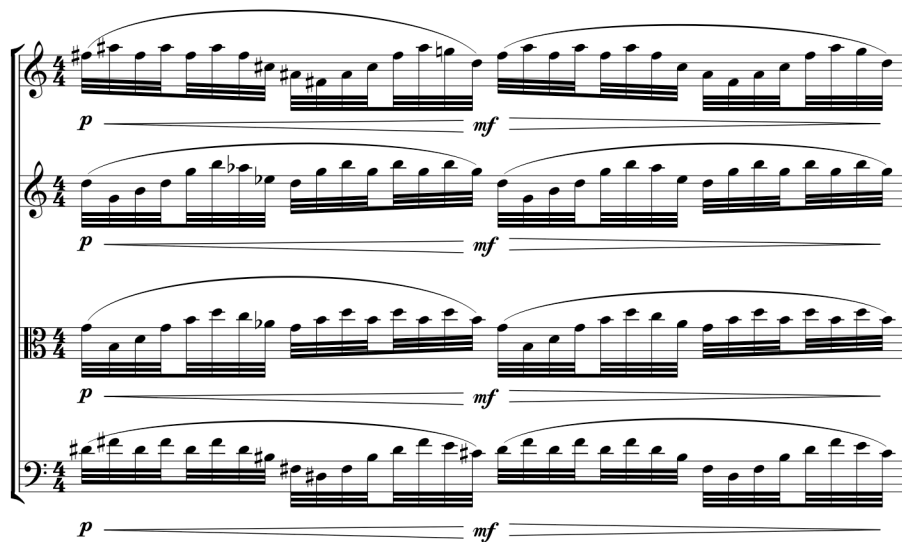
More explicit is the imitation of the arpeggiating strings, heard in the prelude to *Das Rheingold*:



Ex. 3.5 Wagner: 'First stirring under the Rhine as a premonition of consciousness' motif, No. 2a⁶

⁵ Donington, 1974: 284.

⁶ Donington, 1974: 278.



Ex. 3.6 MacMillan: *Etwas zurückhaltend*, b.109 (repeated in b. 110)

However, the most prominent of all the motifs quoted from the *Ring* is the ‘transformation’ motif, heard only twice throughout the entire cycle, in Act II of *Siegfried*, and at the very end of *Götterdämmerung*. MacMillan provides a subtle reference to this motif at the very opening of his string quartet, including the first four notes of the motif in bar 9 of the first violin part, but with a flattened fourth note, such that the interval between the third and fourth notes becomes a minor second, rather than Wagner’s original major second. This occurs again, with a more extended and clearly recognizable misquotation of the motif, at bar 168:



Ex. 3.7 Wagner: ‘Transformation’ motif, No. 91a⁷



Ex. 3.8 MacMillan: *Etwas zurückhaltend*, bb. 168-73 (first violin part only)

⁷ Donington, 1974: 307.

It is only at the very end of the piece, where the work's title is provided as a tempo indication, that the 'transformation' motif is quoted correctly in its entirety. However, it is less obvious than the above example for three reasons: it does not use the same rhythm as Wagner's original; the notes are separated by rests, initially appearing only one or two at a time; and the although the pitches are correct, they are subjected to octave displacement – as much as three octaves (G flat to A flat in bar 191) – distorting the lyricism of the melodic line into a much more angular melody:

Largo ♩. = 44-48
Etwas zurückhaltend (un poco sostenuto)

Ex. 3.9 MacMillan: *Etwas zurückhaltend*, bb. 287-92 (first violin part only)

Just one year before revising and publishing *Etwas zurückhaltend*, MacMillan had referred to *Götterdämmerung* in his *St John Passion*, hence the composer's comment above that the string quartet seemed relevant to his recent work. This quotation occurs in the concluding six bars of the third movement, 'Jesus before Pilate', and the opening bar of the following, fourth movement, 'Jesus is condemned to death'. It is taken from Siegfried's funeral march at the conclusion of Act III, scene 2 of *Götterdämmerung*, and the composer confirmed that this quotation was entirely conscious and deliberate.⁸ The quotation is brief but distinct, comprising the succession of two, repeated, accented quavers played by the brass and percussion, accompanied by a sustained fifth (C and G) in the woodwind (see Exx. 3.10 and 3.11):

⁸ In conversation with the composer, 11.2.11.

$\text{♩} = c88$

Fl 1 2
Ob 1
C Ang
Cl 1
(Bb) 2
Bsn
Cbn
Hn (F) 1 2 3 4
Tpt 1 2 3
Tbne 1 2
Bass Tbne
Tuba
Timp
Perc BD

cresc poco a poco

ff

Ex. 3.10 MacMillan: *St John Passion*, Movement III, bb. 554-5 (excluding choir and string parts)

Ex. 3.11 Wagner: *Götterdämmerung*, Act III, Scene 2, 'Feierlich' (excluding string parts)⁹

Finally, and written in the same year but adopting a much more playful demeanour, the second part of *A Scotch Bestiary* briefly refers to one of the most famous extracts from this music-drama cycle, the Ride of the Valkyries (see Ex. 3.12).

Just as references to Wagner's *Ring* cycle are to be found in works by MacMillan stretching a considerable time-span of more than a quarter of a century (1982-2007), his repeated retrospection to Wagner's seminal music drama *Tristan und Isolde* are equally – indeed, even more – significant. This work, which is often referred to as the beginning of musical modernism due to its harmonic originality and tonal instability, is first found in MacMillan's Piano Sonata (1985). Like *Etwas zurückhaltend*, this sonata was written while MacMillan was a

⁹ No bar numbers are included, but this occurs very soon after Siegfried actually dies, beginning twelve bars after the indication "SIEGFRIED sinkt zurück und stirbt", "Siegfried sinks back and dies".

The image shows a musical score for brass instruments. The parts are: Hn. (Horn), Tpt. (Trumpet), Tbne. (Trombone), Bass Tbne. (Bass Trombone), and Tuba. The Horns and Trombones are playing a 'galloping' rhythm, marked 'ff' (fortissimo). The Trumpets and Tuba are playing sustained notes, marked 'p' (piano). The score is for measures 46-7 of Part II of MacMillan's *A Scotch Bestiary*.

Ex. 3.12 MacMillan: *A Scotch Bestiary*, Part II, bb. 46-7 (brass parts only)

student at Durham University. It was one of the three works MacMillan developed from the eight that he submitted for his PhD,¹⁰ returning to the sonata fourteen years later and reworking it into his Symphony No. 2, in which the references to *Tristan* are made more explicit. Before addressing the Wagnerian references in these two works, it is worth briefly mentioning MacMillan's *Dominus dabit benignitatem* (2007) from the cycle of *Strathclyde Motets*, which alludes to rather than quotes from *Tristan*. This motet opens with a distinctive chord progression, almost identical to the very opening of the third act of *Tristan* (see Exx. 3.13 and 3.14). When asked whether such a quotation was intentional or not, MacMillan admitted that as well as the main theme of *Tristan* from the opening prelude, he now hears the prelude to Act III in the *Seven Last Words*: "You can feel the tread of the chords at the beginning of that piece, and it's obviously carried on as a sort of echo formation."¹¹ MacMillan is referring to the 'sorrow' cadence, first used in the clarinet quintet, *Tuireadh*, and then for the very opening of *Seven Last Words from the Cross* (Ex. 3.15).

¹⁰ The other two works are *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* (no date: 1983 or earlier), whose material was later used for *Three Dawn Rituals* (1983) and *Búsqueda* (1988); and *Songs of a Just War* (1984), whose central movement, 'The Children', was reused in several subsequent works. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

¹¹ In interview with the composer, 2.11.08.

Very slow

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

Do - mi - nus,

Do - mi - nus,

Do - mi - nus,

Ex. 3.13 MacMillan: *Dominus dabit benignitatem*, bb. 1-3

Mässig langsam.

f

Ex. 3.14 Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde*, Prelude to Act III, bb. 1-2

Largo ♩ = 54

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

ppp

pp

pp

pp

pp

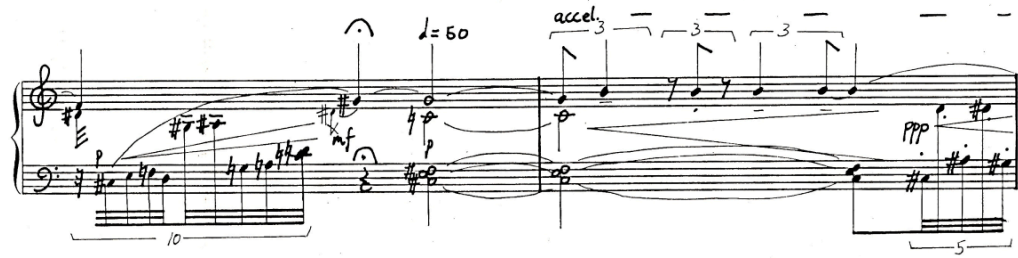
Ex. 3.15 MacMillan: *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, bb. 1-4

As can be seen from the musical examples above, despite a common 'thread' among all three works, *Dominus dabit benignitatem* bears the greater resemblance to the opening of the third act of *Tristan* than to *Seven Last Words from the Cross*. Exx. 3.13 and 3.14 indicate that they

both start with a minor chord with an added sixth spaced closely against the fifth of the chord, and in each case this added sixth is in the upper voice, which then gradually ascends a perfect fourth: in the MacMillan, by a minor third followed by a major second; in the Wagner, by a minor second followed by a major second and another major second. In addition, the fact that the motet was written so soon after two much larger works that refer to *Tristan* (*The Sacrifice* and *St John Passion*) suggests that its reference is an unintentional but undeniably present allusion.

No such ambiguities are found in the other two works however, which are closely related to one another, despite the fourteen years that separate their composition dates. The case of Piano Sonata (1985) and Symphony No. 2 (1999) demonstrates MacMillan's enthusiasm for developing existing works into different genres, and once again reveals a double-retrospection to modernism: the MacMillan of 1999 looking back to one of his earliest modernist works, the Piano Sonata, which was at least partly inspired by the MacMillan of 1985 looking back to Wagner's *Tristan*. MacMillan explains that the original sonata is "opened up" to new forms of expansion, sometimes according to colouristic potential, other times to dramatic potential, and some material has been "projected into new contexts."¹² Arguably the most ostensible 'projection of material into a new context' is the development of the reference to *Tristan*. In the earlier context of the short, concluding movement of the Piano Sonata, there are Tristanesque allusions, but these are relatively subtle, such as the chord in the second half of bar 12, and slightly more explicitly in the chord at the beginning of bar eighteen, followed by the chromatically shifting chords in bar 20:

¹² MacMillan, 1999: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Symphony-No-2/1007>>



Ex. 3.16 MacMillan: *Piano Sonata*, Movement III, bb. 12-13¹³

Ex. 3.17 MacMillan: *Piano Sonata*, Movement III, bb. 17-20

However, the composer has confirmed that while the relationship between *Tristan* and *Dominus dabit benignitatem* was unintended, the connection between *Tristan* and his *Piano Sonata* was far more deliberate:

I was certainly aware of the allusion to *Tristan* in the 1985 *Sonata* [although] I wasn't aware of any deep reflection on why it was there. When I came to the 2nd *Symphony* it became apparent that there was something there to be pursued. The tragic quality of the doomed love story seemed appropriate for a work which grew out of my 'breach' with Scotland!¹⁴

Symphony No. 2 makes much greater and more explicit use of the famous 'Tristan chord'. As MacMillan himself has admitted, this refers to his difficult love affair with Scotland and the piece is therefore closely

¹³ These examples are taken from the original PhD manuscript to show that the *Tristan* reference was not only included in the later, published version of the sonata, but that it was a clear inspiration for MacMillan as early as 1985.

¹⁴ MacMillan, via email, 15.3.09.

related to the works discussed in Chapter Two. However, rather than using the satirical gestures of *A Scotch Bestiary* or the Second Piano Concerto, Symphony No. 2 is a bleak work, without humorous relief. The references to *Tristan* in particular are one of the work's most disturbing features, and MacMillan comments on these in his programme note, mentioning the presence of "some 'tristanesque' moments of repose... which are subjected to some queasy stretching and sliding on the strings".¹⁵

Although the 'Tristan chord' is alluded to in bars 37-8 and 40-1, it is in bars 57-9 that the first explicit quotation is made (see Ex. 3.18). This musical quotation is then repeated exactly in bars 61-3, but this time with the strings ascending rather than descending a minor third, again via a glissando. However, this brief ascent only prepares a second descent, now extended further down into the lower registers of the cellos and double basses (see Ex. 3.19):

The musical score for MacMillan's Symphony No. 2, Movement III, bars 57-9, shows the woodwind and string parts. The woodwinds (Oboe, Cor Anglais, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, Contrabassoon) play a descending line starting on a half note, moving to a quarter note, and then a half note, with dynamics mp, p, mp, pp. The strings (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello) play a descending glissando starting on a half note, moving to a quarter note, and then a half note, with dynamics p, mp, pp. The strings are marked 'sighing gliss.'

Ex. 3.18 MacMillan: *Symphony No. 2*, Movement III, bb. 57-9 (woodwind, excluding piccolo, and string parts only)

¹⁵ MacMillan, 1999: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Symphony-No-2/1007>>

The musical score for MacMillan's *Symphony No. 2*, Movement III, measures 65-70, features woodwind and string parts. The woodwinds (Oboe, Cor Anglais, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon) play a melodic line with dynamics *mp*, *p*, *mp*, and *pp*, and a *lunga* marking. The strings (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass) play a glissando with dynamics *p*, *mp*, *pp*, and a *lunga* marking.

Ex. 3.19 MacMillan: *Symphony No. 2*, Movement III, bb. 65-70 (woodwind, excluding piccolo, and string parts only)

These quintessentially MacMillanesque ‘sighing’ string glissandi are reminiscent of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* and the quotation of *A Parcel o’ Rogues* in the second movement of the Second Piano Concerto. All three represent the composer’s dying love for Scotland. However, the following discussion explores the way in which Wagner’s *Tristan* is transformed by MacMillan for another, completely different purpose. This refers to a much more positive interpretation of the work: not as a doomed love story to reflect a composer’s response to the loss of nationhood, but as a sacrificial love story that has strong theological implications.

Sacrificial Passions: Tristan und Isolde in MacMillan's The Sacrifice, St John Passion and Miserere

While the figure of Wagner has clearly long been a source of inspiration to MacMillan, Messiaen's interest in the rich narrative of *Tristan und Isolde* in particular was undoubtedly influential in MacMillan's attentiveness to the myth and its theological associations. It would not be an exaggeration to call Messiaen one of MacMillan's role models, not least because of the shared, overt Catholicism expressed by each composer in their works, but also because of their common engagement in fusing the sense of tradition that accompanies religion with aspects of a modernist musical language.

In an interview from 2008, MacMillan expressed his interest with Messiaen's interpretation of the Tristan myth.¹⁶ The religious faith of the composers is especially relevant here, for with regard to Tristan and Isolde (which inspired his Tristan Tryptich of *Harawi, Turangalîla-Symphonie* and *Cinq Rechants*), Messiaen summarises his attitude to the three aspects of his work – the Catholic faith, the Tristan myth and nature – in the following words: "They are united in one and the same idea: divine love!"¹⁷ This interconnectivity between Catholicism and the Tristan narrative clearly appealed to MacMillan, and inspired two major works written at a similar time: *The Sacrifice* (2005-6) and *St John Passion* (2007).

The narrative of MacMillan's second opera, *The Sacrifice*, derives from *The Mabinogion*, a collection of Celtic myths as seen through the eyes of medieval Wales. This collection includes eleven stories: 'The Four Branches of the Mabinogi', which Sioned Davies describes as the 'mabinogi proper' and which finish with the same formula¹⁸; and seven, more disparate stories. MacMillan had used this ancient source for an

¹⁶ MacMillan, quoted in Hallam, 2008: 22.

¹⁷ Messiaen, quoted in Sherlaw Johnson, 1989: 41.

¹⁸ Davies, 2007: x.

earlier work, *The Birds of Rhiannon*¹⁹, and before exploring *The Sacrifice* in any depth, it is worth noting several important points about this precursor. According to opera's librettist Michael Symmons Roberts, *The Sacrifice* (completed in 2006) was ten years in the making²⁰, initiated by a commission from Anthony Freud at Welsh National Opera.²¹ Therefore the initial conception of the opera occurred in 1996, five years before the orchestral tone poem, *The Birds of Rhiannon* (2001). The programmatic element of this work is shared with that of *The Sacrifice*, using 'The Second Branch of the Mabinogi', and it is from this tale that the tone poem takes its title: the Birds of Rhiannon themselves are mentioned briefly at the end of the legend, singing a beautiful song which has the power to send the living to sleep and to reawaken the dead.

Though it has been described here as an orchestral tone poem, it is difficult to categorise *The Birds of Rhiannon* accurately, since it defies traditional genres. The composer describes it as "a dramatic concerto for orchestra with a mystical coda for choir".²² Rather than using the Mabinogion story itself for this final choral movement, MacMillan uses Symmons Roberts' poetic response to the ancient tale for its text. The relationship between *The Sacrifice* and *The Birds of Rhiannon* raises two significant points. First, the initial intention was to compose an opera, and this idea was subsequently transformed into an orchestral tone poem before eventually being realized as an opera. This is similar to the conception of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, since MacMillan first considered it for an opera before writing the highly successful orchestral tone poem. No doubt it was due to this work's remarkable

¹⁹ The mid-twentieth-century British composer, Joseph Holbrooke, wrote an orchestral piece with the same title, and he was also very interested in tales from Welsh mythology. However there is nothing to suggest that MacMillan had this work in mind when writing his own *The Birds of Rhiannon*.

²⁰ It should be added that although initial ideas for the opera came about as early as 1996, it only took MacMillan two years to actually write the work, 2005-6.

²¹ Roberts, quoted in Morton, *The Tablet*: 8.9.07.

²² MacMillan, quoted in Johnson, 2002: 5.

success²³ that MacMillan was reluctant to develop it into the operatic medium, since it would inevitably pale by comparison.²⁴ As *The Birds of Rhiannon* received a less favourable critical response than *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, MacMillan was free to mould its narrative into an opera, as originally intended.

The second point for consideration concerns the actual music, for these two works are not only connected through their literary inspiration. Unsurprisingly, MacMillan uses much of the musical material from *The Birds of Rhiannon* in *The Sacrifice*; indeed, every movement of the tone poem is reproduced in the opera. There is even a satirical gesture to the opera's precursor, naming the band that performs at the wedding 'The Birds' (of Rhiannon). The tone poem is therefore both a dramatic and musical antecedent to the opera.

As stated above, *The Sacrifice* borrows extensively but not exclusively from 'The Second Branch of the Mabinogi', a synopsis of which is included in Appendix J1. MacMillan and Symmons Roberts make some significant alterations to the original Welsh narrative, such as the inclusion of the character Elis. While all hope of reconciliation is dismissed through the Efnysien's murder of Gwern in the Mabinogion story, Evan's killing of Gwyn in *The Sacrifice* is less overpowering, since unlike Malowch and Branwen in *The Mabinogion* episode, who only have one son, Gwern, Mal and Sian in *The Sacrifice* have two sons. The invention of Elis, the second son, therefore has great implications in terms of the opera's conclusion, since an element of hope is injected into final stages of the drama.

Another departure from the original tale, which distinguishes *The Sacrifice's* drama from its original source, resembles Wagner's

²³ It was warmly received at its premiere at the 1990 BBC Proms, and at the time of writing, it has received five recordings, on labels including Koch Swan (Jerzy Maksymiuk), BIS (Osmo Vänska), Chandos (James MacMillan), LSO Live (Colin Davis) and the LPO record label (Marin Alsop).

²⁴ Having said that, the climax of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* was used for the first (purely instrumental) movement of the semi-operatic music theatre work, *Visitatio Sepulchri* (1993).

Tristan und Isolde. The connections between the Welsh myth and Wagner's interpretation of the Tristan myth are so apparent that they warrant little elaboration: two rival tribes (from the same countries, England and Ireland, though the nationalities of the King and his betrothed are reversed in Wagner's opera); an arranged marriage to bring about peace; the failure of this agreement; and the self-induced death of the instigator of the marriage (Bran and Tristan). MacMillan and Symmons Roberts strengthen the Wagnerian resemblance further still by making a significant modification to the relationship between Sian (Branwen) and Evan (Efnysien) in their opera. Instead of playing the part of brother and sister, Evan and Sian are lovers, just as Tristan and Isolde have fallen in love with each other before Isolde marries King Mark. In each case, there is a pre-existing relationship between the bride-to-be and another man.

While completing *The Sacrifice* in 2006, MacMillan was reading a book concerning *Tristan und Isolde*, and admitted that he had not only drawn on this book for some of his talks, but it was also having an influence on his music.²⁵ The book in question is *Death-devoted Heart: Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's Tristan und Isolde* by the philosopher Roger Scruton, published just two years before the completion of *The Sacrifice*. The following discussion is unapologetically dominated by this important book, in an attempt to reveal the manner in which Wagner's *Tristan*, and specifically the polysemic nature of the 'Liebestod', infiltrates not only *The Sacrifice* but also MacMillan's *St John Passion*, completed the following year, and to a lesser extent, his *Miserere*.

Despite the extraordinarily advanced harmonic language *Tristan* employs, its subject is far from revolutionary, with Wagner turning to ancient narratives to aid the present. Scruton has proposed that: "Myth dawned on Wagner as a form of social hope. It was a way of thinking that it could restore to modernity the lost sense of the ideal, without

²⁵ MacMillan, quoted in Hallam, 2008: 22.

which human life is worthless.”²⁶ The connection with MacMillan’s retrospective modernism is immediately apparent, with the composer frequent combining ancient and modern elements.²⁷ Scruton claims that Wagner’s discovery of myth was one of the great intellectual advances of modern times: the ancestor and inspiration of comparative anthropology, symbolist poetry, psychoanalysis, and many aesthetic and theological doctrines that are now common currency.²⁸ With reference to poets inspired by Wagner’s interpretation of myth, he mentions T.S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland*. Although almost certainly coincidental, it is fitting that MacMillan, an admirer of T.S. Eliot²⁹ and his fusion of modernist language with a strong Christian faith, should write the stage indication on the opening page of the score of *The Sacrifice*: “Wasteland / derelict ballroom of hotel. The night before the wedding”.³⁰

Based on a mythological tale, one might expect the temporal context of *The Sacrifice* to be as vague as the location, as in *Tristan*, which places the myth and its characters before recorded time in an era that is timeless. As Scruton notes: “The time of heroes was a mythical time – and mythical time is *now*. Myths do not speak of what was, but what is eternally”.³¹ With reference to the eternal nature of myth, MacMillan openly admits the connection to *Tristan*, as well as other ancient myths, in an interview about *The Sacrifice*, explaining that the story he and Symmons Roberts selected from *The Mabinogion* has a timeless quality which resonates with the King Arthur story, the Fisher-King myth, and *Tristan*, all of which contain certain universals which

²⁶ Scruton, 2004: 4.

²⁷ These include the use of Latin and vernacular texts; the frequent incorporation of plainchant; the use of ancient myth and current political events.

²⁸ Scruton, 2004: 4.

²⁹ T.S. Eliot was represented musically in the penultimate movement of MacMillan’s, *...as others see us...* (1990), which includes character portraits of seven historical figures: Henry VIII, John Wilmot, John Churchill, George Byron, William Wordsworth, T.S. Eliot and Dorothy Hodgkin.

³⁰ MacMillan, 2005: 1.

³¹ Scruton, 2004: 5.

are as contemporary as they are eternal.³² Here, the relationship between past and present that lies at the heart of MacMillan's retrospective modernism is strengthened to such a degree that the distinction between these two time periods fades away, leaving a 'timeless time' with universal values.

The myths used for *Tristan* and *The Sacrifice* are both ancient, Celtic stories. Although MacMillan and Symmons Roberts made alterations to the original Mabinogion myth so that it resembles Wagner's *Tristan* to a greater extent, it is not so much the similarities as the differences that Scruton's book highlights. Both MacMillan and Wagner address an almost identical subject, but from often - though by no means always - starkly contrasting positions. It is worth considering some of the similarities first. In *Tristan*, Brangaene has a particularly close relationship with Isolde, as does Kurvenal with Tristan. In each case, the relationship is akin to that of a close sibling. Similarly, MacMillan and Symmons Roberts introduce the character of Megan, Sian's sister, who does not appear in the original Mabinogion tale. The storgeic love she shows for her sister not only parallels the close, quasi-sisterly bond between Brangaene and Isolde, but also emphasises the isolation of both Mal and Evan, neither of whom have a Kurvenal figure. Another parallel is also identified in the character of King Marke, a relatively uncomplicated figure acting for the good of his people. In *The Sacrifice* he is made more complex, divided between the characters of Mal and The General. Although it is The General who seeks peace between the warring nations, it is not he himself who is involved in the arranged marriage, but Mal, whereas King Marke is both the instigator of the union with Isolde and is directly involved in it.

Scruton suggests that the structure of Wagner's music-drama is developed around three key events: the first avowal of love, at the very

³² MacMillan, 2007: < <http://www.boosey.com/cr/news/James-MacMillan-interview-about-new-opera-The-Sacrifice/11451&LangID=1> >

moment when Isolde is to be given in marriage to King Marke; the betrayal by Melot and the discovery of Tristan and Isolde by the royal hunting party; and the death and transfiguration of the lovers.³³ The layout of *The Sacrifice* reveals a similar, though not identical structure: it opens with an avowal of love the night before Sian is to be married to Mal; the second act includes the two lovers together, as in *Tristan*, but here there is some variation. Instead of a character betraying Evan's presence in the hotel, he is betrayed by his coat, which Mal finds. In addition, there is no incident of catching the two lovers 'in the act', since Sian remains faithful to her husband. In the third act, the lovers remain alive, with the death and transfiguration expressed respectively through the General and Elis (Sian and Mal's surviving son). It is interesting to note that in both operas, the heir is killed out of jealousy: Melot represents all the jealous courtiers and it is he who delivers the fatal blow to Tristan; and Gwyn is killed out of Evan's jealousy of Sian and Mal's union.

Despite the similarities, the theological implications of these ancient, eternal legends vary in a subtle but highly significant way for Wagner and MacMillan. Although it would be erroneous to claim that Wagner adopted the myth merely for its dramatic narrative, his idiosyncratic stance on religion differs from MacMillan's established Catholicism. Scruton comments that Wagner lived in defiance of Christian morality, the church had no day-to-day significance for him, and much of his inspiration came from atheist philosophers such as Feuerbach and Schopenhauer.³⁴ However this disregard for the church is not to be simplistically interpreted as a lack of admiration for *religion* in the arts, for Wagner himself reveals his attitude towards the latter, arguing that it is reserved to art to salvage the kernel of religion and

³³ Scruton, 2004: 35.

³⁴ Scruton, 2004: 6.

reveal the concealed truths within religious symbols.³⁵ Religious truth is thus discovered not in the church but in the opera house.

This approach concurs with Wagner's concept of 'music drama', particularly with regard to the participation of the audience as greater than that of operas, such that they become more like a congregation than an audience. Scruton claims that if we are to make sense of the great Wagnerian dramas, we must understand the currency in which they trade – the currency of the sacred: "A world of sacred things is a world of sanctity, consecration, and sacrifice, and also of sacrilege and desecration".³⁶ Again, at a superficial level this seems entirely contradictory, even blasphemous, to MacMillan the devout Catholic, who intertwines the strands of Wagnerian music drama with Christianity. While not necessarily wishing to create 'The Church of MacMillan' in the opera house, he nevertheless appreciates the utility of the operatic genre as a facility to aid and enhance religious understanding.

MacMillan achieves this by making the characters more human than Wagner's. As Scruton notes, the rituals, oaths, and acts of heroic sacrifice in *Tristan* are in no way seen as intrusions into human normality but are taken for granted, as windows that look out on to the transcendental.³⁷ Nevertheless, he later writes of the social ties Isolde has to King Marke, for the marriage vows that bind them create a tie that is both personal and political, and the safety of the realm depends upon her honouring those vows – or at least appearing to honour them: "Every social and moral law forbids the bond between Isolt and Tristan, and it is only because of this that the supreme force of their love becomes apparent."³⁸ Similarly, though conversely, it is only through Sian and Evan's passionate love duet in Act II of MacMillan's opera that

³⁵ Wagner, quoted in Scruton, 2004: 7.

³⁶ Scruton, 2004: 7.

³⁷ Scruton, 2004: 8.

³⁸ Scruton, 2004: 30.

her agapé for her people becomes apparent. Unlike *Tristan*, the cost of heroic sacrifice is very much seen as an intrusion into human normality. *The Sacrifice* presents this explicitly: instead of Sian's marriage to Mal serving to emphasise her love for Evan, her erotic love for Evan (great though it may be) tells of the magnitude of her agapéc love for peace in her community. She is willing to deny herself this happiness for the sake of others. Tristan poses a question that only Isolde can understand: "Where I am going now will you, Isolde, follow?"³⁹, but when Evan asks this of Sian in their Act II love duet, she responds in the negative – not because she does not love Evan, as the preceding duet testifies, but because her agapéc love for her people exceeds her erotic love for him.

Although in conventional language the term 'erotic' has physical, sexual connotations, it can refer more generally to a romantic love. This difference raises an important point of distinction between *Tristan* and *The Sacrifice*. The fact that the hunting party surprises the lovers in Wagner's music drama implies sexual activity, while in the Act II love duet of *The Sacrifice*, both Sian and Evan are left alone, and while they sing of giving their hearts and souls to each other, as far as carnal union is concerned she remains faithful to her husband, and indeed to her people.

The tension between erotic and agapéc love provides the crux of each opera, albeit with different consequences. Scruton elaborates on this in relation to *Tristan*:

Heroes of compassion (*agapé*) renounce their desires for the sake of others, and thereby redeem and renew the social order ... Heroes of erotic love (*eros*) exist outside the social order in a state of exalted solitude; but they too long either to redeem or be redeemed through an act of living sacrifice. Redemption comes when, having found the love that meets their inner need, they are carried onward by it to extinction.⁴⁰

³⁹ Scruton, 2004: 63.

⁴⁰ Scruton, 2004: 9.

It is this comment by Scruton, above all others, that most succinctly distinguishes Sian's character from Isolde's. Sian's agapé is victorious over her eros; Isolde's is not. Indeed, so insular is the perspective of *Tristan's* characters and the work itself, that one is only momentarily reminded of the initial reason for the arranged union between King Marke and Isolde: to benefit the nations of their countries. As soon as she has drunk the potion, Isolde's loyalty to this cause is obliterated, and the matter is not mentioned again for the remainder of the music drama. This inward-looking vision is emphasized by the lack of chorus in *Tristan*: the people are not represented at all. Isolde's love for Tristan has conquered all other concerns. In contrast, the socialist side of MacMillan shines brightly through Sian, who never forgets her duty, despite her love for Evan. A large chorus of her people are frequently present to remind her of her responsibility, and it is through Sian that the Christian element is revealed, providing the sharpest point of distinction between these two, very similar tales: "Charity seeks to give; erotic love seeks to possess."⁴¹

It is somewhat paradoxical that Scruton claims that like Shakespeare, Wagner understood that communities need authority, and that those charged with upholding it are not oppressors but heroes of another kind, condemned to a life of lonely sacrifice.⁴² This begs the questions: what loneliness do Tristan and Isolde suffer; and where is the community that requires authority? In *Tristan* such a community is non-existent. By contrast this lonely fate is certainly true of Sian by the end of *The Sacrifice*: she is trapped in a loveless marriage in which her husband beats her; the man she loves has now become the murderer of her eldest son; and finally her husband murders her father. All she has left is her sister, Megan and young son, Elis.

⁴¹ Scruton, 2004: 120.

⁴² Scruton, 2004: 62.

Yet Wagner argues Tristan and Isolde are nevertheless heroic, and that eros, as well as agapé can redeem man: “[Wagner’s art] shows man himself as his own redeemer, and the proof that this redemption is possible – even if it is a proof that depends on the highest artistic contrivance – clears the psychic space that we require.”⁴³ Conversely, MacMillan’s approach is far more Christian-centred: man needs a saviour – he himself cannot redeem himself - and this is expressed by the failure of all the sacrifices. The inclusion of the Agnus Dei at the end of the opera⁴⁴, at the General’s funeral, supports this argument: it is the Lamb of God whose mercy the people plead for; it is the Lamb of God who redeems man. MacMillan could have chosen part of the Latin Requiem Mass here as he does for Gywn’s wake, with the inclusion of the Prayer of Eternal Rest sung by the chorus: “Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.”⁴⁵ However, the choice of the Agnus Dei for the General’s death implies an element of mortal humility. Disguised as a funereal lament, this is a desperate cry for forgiveness from the people, for while the Prayer of Eternal Rest is said for those who have died, the Agnus Dei begs for forgiveness of the people saying the prayer: “Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world. Have mercy on *us*”. The Agnus Dei at the General’s funeral is both personal and social: “The Gospels tell the wondrous story of Christ’s passion, in which the Lamb of God becomes the victim of the community that he has been sent to save.”⁴⁶ The General turns himself into a scapegoat for the sake of the two rival communities, as Christ did for the sake of man. By uniting against the scapegoat people are released from their rivalries and reconciled⁴⁷, and this is why Sian calls everyone to “feast their eyes” on the General’s corpse. This climax at the end of the opera is a clear expression of

⁴³ Scruton, 2004: 10.

⁴⁴ MacMillan, *The Sacrifice*: 300.

⁴⁵ MacMillan, *The Sacrifice*: 254.

⁴⁶ Scruton, 2004: 164-5.

⁴⁷ Scruton 2004:166.

MacMillan's religious retrospective modernism, where the General's self-sacrifice is paralleled with Christ's: both willingly turn themselves into scapegoats and offer their lives for the sake of the broader community.

Christ's self-sacrificial death is remembered by Christians each week through the religious ritual of the Mass, and Wagner and MacMillan both seek to recreate the essence of religious ritual through myth. Scruton claims that through the *Tristan* myth, we understand both the thing to which we aspire and the forces that prevent us from attaining it:

At the heart of every myth lies a ritual – a mystery in which we participate and which arouses and channels our communal and personal needs. The Wagnerian work of art abounds in these moments of ritual and often crystallizes around a ritual sacrifice such as that to which Tristan and Isolde voluntarily submit.⁴⁸

MacMillan's work also presents numerous instances of ritual, be they unifying (the wedding), sacrificial or commemorative. It is interesting that Scruton mentions the communal as well as personal aspects of a music drama that has no representation of the general people. He is of course referring not to the community in the work itself but in the opera house: those sitting in their seats, taking part in the ritual of Wagner's *Tristan*. However, although Wagner's dramaturgy may demand a high level of attention from its audience – even to an extent where a parallel with a religious ritual might be made – it is nevertheless difficult to appreciate how the communal element is recreated. With reference to this problem, Scruton focuses on three areas. First, he re-affirms the relationship between *Tristan* and religious ritual, from the practical aspect of sitting with others to view and participate in the event, to the catharsis revealed through a sacrificial scapegoat.⁴⁹ He then mentions the people's relationship to the

⁴⁸ Scruton, 2004: 11-12.

⁴⁹ Scruton, 2004: 164.

scapegoat as a means of interpreting the ritual of religious sacrifice.⁵⁰ Perhaps it is for this reason that MacMillan incorporates minimal but clearly recognisable material from *The Sacrifice* into the movement ‘The Crucifixion’ of his *St John Passion*. This distinctive theme, presented by the trombones, is both aurally and visually identical in each work, for MacMillan uses exactly the same durations, scoring, and even pitch in *St John Passion* as used for this section in *The Sacrifice*. Its sacrificial nature is explicitly strong, since this music is taken from the orchestral interlude that precedes Gwyn’s ill-fated Investiture in the third and final scene of Act II:

The image displays a musical score for six trombone parts. The first three parts are labeled 'Trombone 1', 'Trombone 2', and 'Bass Trombone', each with a 'ff' (fortissimo) dynamic marking. The remaining three parts are labeled 'Tbn.', 'Tbn.', and 'B. Tbn.'. The music is written in 4/4 time and features a series of eighth and quarter notes with various accidentals, creating a distinctive melodic theme. The notation includes many sharps and flats, and the overall structure is consistent across the different parts.

Ex. 3.20 MacMillan: *The Sacrifice*, Act II, bb. 460-5 (trombone parts only); *St John Passion*, ‘Sanctus Immortalis’, bb. 29-34 (trombone parts only)

Finally, Scruton admits that *Tristan* fails in terms of representing the communal aspect of religious ritual. As mentioned above, MacMillan employs a chorus (for both *The Sacrifice* and *St John Passion*), while *Tristan* does not. Although this may seem like a trivial point, it has highly significant repercussions for the ‘music drama-religious ritual’ relationship. In many Greek tragedies, the chorus, representing the community as a whole, is purged by the suffering and sacrifice of the hero; but by the end of *Tristan*, the community has sunk away entirely,

⁵⁰ Scruton, 2004: 168.

and neither loses nor benefits from the deaths of the central characters.⁵¹

In *The Sacrifice* and *St John Passion*, MacMillan combines his great admiration for *Tristan* with his Catholicism. Indeed, one may go so far as to say that he literally ‘catholicises’ the Tristan myth, not so much with reference to religion (although religious elements are included) as in the shift of focus from the central lovers to the general community. His opera is catholic – it is universal, and it concerns everyone. This stands in contrast to the intimacy of *Tristan*, which offers no communal catharsis at all.

This intimate/public tension is strengthened through the reproductive differences of the two works: *Tristan* is without children, consumed by a love that has no reproductive goal and whose meaning lies entirely in the obsessive bond between lovers⁵², whereas the sole (or at least main) purpose of Sian and Mal’s marriage is to produce an heir who will rule both tribes in peace. Their union is forged not out of eros for each other, but out of agapé for their peoples: a rational rather than emotional decision. It is this double-grievance that so infuriates Evan about Sian’s marriage: not only is she marrying another, who she does not love, but this other man is the enemy who has murdered many of Sian’s and Evan’s people, and therefore an unworthy candidate. Rather than offering acts of self-sacrifice to his future wife, all Mal can offer are the forced sacrifices of her nation.

Both of these arranged unions are public and practical, and thus augment the intimacy of the true, secret erotic relationships: Sian and Evan, and *Tristan* and Isolde. In each case there exists an illicit, forbidden love between the pairs of lovers, which leads to an inevitable move toward death. In *The Sacrifice* however, the deaths are not of the lovers themselves, as in *Tristan und Isolde*. Unable to bear Sian’s

⁵¹ Scruton, 2004: 174-5.

⁵² Scruton, 2004: 16.

rejection, Evan releases his anger by killing Gwyn: “Erotic love is jealous, can abide no competitors, and may turn to hate when the beloved loves or desires another”.⁵³ However, Scruton claims that in Wagner's worldview death is not merely a way out for forbidden love but a fulfilment of erotic love *even in its permitted forms*.⁵⁴ Although this area is not explored by MacMillan in his opera, obvious parallels with the Christian crucifixion and resurrection are evident. In quoting *Tristan* at the end of his *St John Passion*, MacMillan suggests that the ultimate ‘Liebestod’ is the crucifixion: Christ's agapé for the world through his own self-sacrifice.



Ex. 3.21 MacMillan: *St John Passion*, Movement X, bb. 23-26 (cor anglais part only)

By including this reference, MacMillan effectively develops the eros-death relationship of *Tristan* into a Christian, agapé-death relationship, a concept Michael Tanner alluded to in 1996 when he described *Tristan* as one of “the two greatest religious works of art of our culture” (the other being Bach’s *St Matthew Passion*).⁵⁵

This connection between erotic and violent passions undoubtedly affected MacMillan’s opera and oratorio, particularly as Scruton develops what Tanner started, drawing the reader’s attention to further ‘passionate’ aspects of *Tristan*. He (Scruton) writes:

By accepting death through an act of sacrifice, we transcend death and raise ourselves above the mortal condition that imposed this fate upon us. This thought underlies the mystery of Christ's Passion; and also that of the passion (another kind of passion, but in a sense also the same kind) of Tristan and Isolde. Hence the description of the drink – a *Sühnetrank*, a drink of atonement, the same drink that is

⁵³ Scruton, 2004: 120.

⁵⁴ Scruton, 2004: 30.

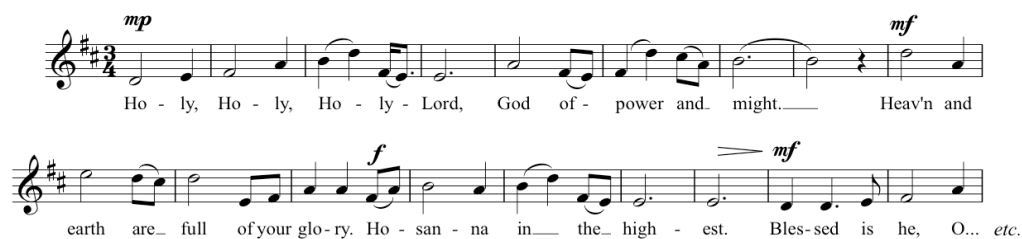
⁵⁵ Tanner, 1996: 13.

offered in the Eucharist and which there symbolizes the death that atoned for the sins of the world.⁵⁶

Again, this parallel is a significant aid in comprehending MacMillan's quotation of *Tristan* at the end of his *St John Passion*. The social, philosophical and religious aspects are made explicitly clear in both this work and *The Sacrifice*.

Tristan and The Tryst

There is a double-connection that unites *The Sacrifice* with MacMillan's *St John Passion*. The importance of Wagner's *Tristan* has been made apparent, but piece links these two works and, remarkably, it is used in the same way as *Tristan*. This second work is by MacMillan himself, *The Tryst*, written early in his career in 1984. It was initially conceived as a love song in the style of a Scottish folk ballad. Just one year later, writing his first congregational mass setting, the *St Anne's Mass*, he used this simple song for the Sanctus, adapting it slightly for the sake of the new, religious text:



Ex. 3.22 MacMillan: *St Anne's Mass*, 'Sanctus', bb. 5-22 (congregational part only)

The original text was by Scots poet William Soutar and is erotic in nature:

O luely, luely cam she in
And luely she lay down:
I kent her be her caller lips
And her breists sae sma' and roun'.

A' thru the nicht we spak nae word
Nor sinder'd bane frae bane:
A' thru the nicht I heard her hert
Gang soundin' wi' my ain.

⁵⁶ Scruton, 2004: 49.

It was about the waukrife hour
 Whan cocks begin to craw
 That she smool'd saftly thru the mirk
 Afore the day wud daw.

Sae luely, luely, cam she in
 Sae luely was she gaen
 And wi' her a' my simmer days
 Like they had never been.⁵⁷

MacMillan uses the melody of *The Tryst* again at the end of his *St John Passion*, emphasizing the religious love song association he had started over twenty years earlier with its inclusion in the *St Anne's Mass*:

The musical score is for four Horns in F (Hn (F)). It consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 57-66) shows the horns playing a melody with various dynamics including *mp* (*solemn, tenuto, sonore*) and *f*. The second system (measures 67-76) shows the horns playing a melody with various dynamics including *f* and *p*. The third system (measures 77-86) shows the horns playing a melody with various dynamics including *p*.

Ex. 3.23 MacMillan: *St John Passion*, Movement X, bb.57-66 (horn parts only)

Thus, the concept of the transformation of erotic love into agap ic, religious love is shared by these two important themes of *Tristan* and *The Tryst*. MacMillan extracts musical aspects of *Tristan* and *The Tryst* and places them in his *St John Passion*, both in the concluding movement of the work (Exx. 3.21 and 3.23 respectively). These musical references are clearly audible and unambiguously establish a theological connection. For *The Sacrifice*, which includes music neither from *Tristan* nor from *The Tryst*, MacMillan takes narrative aspects from each work and places them in the context of his opera. While the

⁵⁷ Soutar, printed at the front of the score: James MacMillan: *Three Scottish Songs*. Boosey and Hawkes, 2007.

extent to which *Tristan* has influenced the drama of *The Sacrifice* has been made clear, it is worth considering the opening and closing scenes of the work: it is a pair of trysts that frames the opera. The first of these is between two lovers, leading to the self-sacrifice of love on Sian's part; the second between two enemies (supposedly, as the General dresses up as Evan and arranges to meet Mal), leading to the self-sacrifice of the General's life.

Just as MacMillan made the eros-to-agapé transformation by quoting *Tristan* in his *St John Passion*, so too did he transform erotic or romantic love into a religious love for the church when he used *The Tryst* for the Sanctus of the *St Anne's Mass* and subsequently by quoting it at the end of the *St John Passion*. Considering *The Tryst* in particular, it is also worth noting that the year in which MacMillan wrote this love ballad coincided with the final year of Pope John Paul II's five-year catechesis, *Theology of the Body*⁵⁸ (1979-1984), where the pontiff provides a detailed study of the Song of Songs, commenting on the way in which the lovers provide a true and liberating vision of the love that results when men and women allow the divine fire of agapé to penetrate and permeate eros. According to John Paul II, eros is to be understood as the heart's aspiration toward what is true, good and beautiful, but for eros to be experienced in this way, it must be integrated with agapé, which brings eros to completion by purifying it.⁵⁹ Even if this teaching of John Paul II had no direct link upon MacMillan's use of *The Tryst*, is noteworthy that he used it for his *St Anne's Mass*, written just one year later.

The multi-faceted nature of 'love' therefore has great implications for the way MacMillan's music should be considered, not least since this theme, in various musical guises, is present in works that stretch across a quarter of a century. The most recent of these

⁵⁸ This was a series of 129 lectures given by the pope during his Wednesday audiences in the Pope Paul VI Hall between September 1979 and November 1984.

⁵⁹ West, 2003: 400.

works in *Miserere*. Shortly after its completion in 2007, MacMillan extracted two choral works from his *St John Passion: ...fiat mihi...* (2007) and *Miserere* (2009). In his programme note to the former, Paul Spicer explains its explicit relationship to the seventh movement of MacMillan's *St John Passion* ('Jesus and his Mother'): "He lifts the choral parts out of their original orchestral context to make a starkly moving unaccompanied lament".⁶⁰ Exactly the same approach was adopted for *Miserere*, which is essentially a choral arrangement of the purely orchestral conclusion of the *St John Passion* (with additional plainchant), and which makes prominent use of both *Tristan* and *The Tryst*. The latter is presented first, subjected to E minor rather than its usual major tonality:

The image shows a musical score for the Tenor and Bass parts of MacMillan's *Miserere*, measures 1-5. The score is in 2/4 time and E minor. It features four staves: Tenor I, Tenor II, Bass I, and Bass II. Each staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and the instruction "desolate and cold". The lyrics are "Mi - se - re - re me - i, De - us: se - cun - dum". The melody is a simple, descending line in each part, with the Tenor parts starting on a higher note than the Bass parts.

Ex. 3.24 MacMillan: *Miserere*, bb. 1-5 (tenor and bass parts only)

This is heard in *St John Passion* also, though far less explicitly in low-register cellos. Both works include all of *The Tryst* melody except the very last phrase, and both lead straight into the next musical idea, Wagner's *Tristan*, seen below in the leap from the E to the C, and the subsequent descending chromaticism:

⁶⁰ Spicer, 2007: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-fiat-mihi/51755>>



Ex. 3.25 MacMillan: *Miserere*, bb. 17-21 (alto part only)

In the choral version of the *Tristan* reference, MacMillan seems to fuse the final phrase of the minor-key version of *The Tryst* to the beginning, using the rising major third in quavers (first heard at the “se” of “secundum” at the opening of the *Miserere*) to introduce the *Tristan* allusion. Yet again, the composer seeks to establish a connection between his romantic love song/love song for the Church and the sacrificial undercurrent of Wagner’s music drama.

However, there are two more musical ideas included in *Miserere* and the final movement of *St John Passion* that occur immediately after the *Tristan* reference, and this establishes a further connection back to *The Sacrifice*. The first of these motifs comprises a declamatory falling phrase:

Ex. 3.26 MacMillan: *St John Passion*, Movement X, bb. 49-51 (trumpet and trombone parts only)

The second motif, distinctive by its rising quintuplet figure, might appropriately be labelled the ‘keening’ motif, due to its lamenting quality and the composer’s indication in the score of *Miserere*:



Ex. 3.27 MacMillan: *Miserere*, bb. 25-30 (soprano part only)

This mournful motif occurs both at the conclusion of *The Birds of Rhiannon* and in the first orchestral interlude of Act III of *The Sacrifice*. After this prelude, Sian sings the declamatory falling figure and the General responds with the keening motif, imploring his daughter Sian for forgiveness (see Ex. 3.28). The fact that MacMillan used these various musical themes from *The Sacrifice*, *The Tryst* and *Tristan* in a setting of the *Miserere* is by no means arbitrary, for the *Miserere* text (Psalm 51(50)) makes specific references to the notion of both sacrifice and begging for forgiveness of sins:

Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness
According to the multitude of Thy mercies do away mine
offences.
Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness: and cleanse me
from my sin.
For I acknowledge my faults: and my sin is ever before me
[...]
Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord: and my mouth shall show
Thy praise.
For Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it Thee: but
Thou delightest not in burnt-offerings.
The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit: a broken and
contrite heart, O God, shalt Thou not despise.
O be favourable and gracious unto Sion:
build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.
Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifice of
righteousness, with the burnt-offerings and oblations: then
shall they offer young bullocks upon Thine altar.⁶¹

⁶¹ Psalm 51(50).

Sian

My life is gone My love now lost

General

For- give me

Sian - For - give me, for - - - For - give me

please, my - daugh - - - 5 - - - tr. ter

Ex. 3.28 MacMillan: *The Sacrifice*, Act III, bb. 123-135 (Sian and The General parts only)

The resemblance between the psalm's penitential text and the General's pleading for forgiveness is clearly evident: in each case, the sinner is aware of his guilt and wishes to be washed clean of his fault.

Using Wagner's *Tristan*, or rather, using Wagner's *Tristan* as interpreted by Scruton, MacMillan develops the eros-agap  relationship in *The Sacrifice*, *St John Passion* and *Miserere*, transforming Scruton's literary perceptions into musical works. MacMillan had long been fascinated by *Tristan*, quoting it in his early Piano Sonata and Symphony No. 2 before Scruton's book had been written, as we have seen. However, the meaning in these earlier works was different, reflecting the composer's complex relationship with his native Scotland. Post-Scruton however, *Tristan* took on a new significance that appealed very much to MacMillan as a composer of religious music. Although he had admired Wagner's music since he was a child, MacMillan now had another reason to admire *Tristan* in particular: not only for the music itself, but also for the religious symbolism embedded in its drama. This made a great impact on MacMillan's religious retrospective modernism, for while Wagner himself was certainly not religious in an orthodox sense, his composition of *Tristan* was nevertheless fuelled by a search for the sacred, and it was Scruton's portrayal of this search that had such profound implications for *The Sacrifice* and *St John Passion*.

Chapter 4.

MacMillan and Bach: Passions, Liturgies and Recycling

While Wagner's *Tristan* offered a somewhat unlikely context in which to discuss theological implications in MacMillan's *The Sacrifice* and *St John Passion*, Bach is a far more conventional figure to find in discussion of music and religion. The vast majority of his compositional output was written for liturgical purposes, from large-scale oratorios to numerous cantatas, composed for Sunday worship each week. MacMillan has, to a far lesser extent, imitated this model by writing music for his own parish church in Glasgow.

This chapter examines several musical-theological connections between Bach and MacMillan, and is divided into three sections. It initially continues the passion-themed conclusion of Chapter Three, comparing MacMillan's *St John Passion* with the passion settings of Bach. The second section explores a practice associated with both Bach and MacMillan: writing for congregational participation. It is in this middle section that MacMillan's attitude towards the revival of the Tridentine Rite in twenty-first century Catholic liturgy is also addressed. Finally, the third part considers another practice found in many works by both MacMillan and Bach, namely musical recycling and parodying.

These three topics all relate to MacMillan's religious retrospective modernism: the inevitable weight of Bach is felt by any composer setting the passion narrative to music; maintaining a balance between ancient liturgical rites and keeping contemporary congregations actively engaged was/is a problem for both composers; and re-working early pieces into more recent compositions implies a sense of constant self-reflection. In each of these three cases, the main ethos of MacMillan's retrospective modernism – that the past should inform the present – is apparent.

The Passions

Although the Christian Passion has been a source of inspiration and interest to numerous composers, from Pergolesi and Haydn to Penderecki and Gubaidulina, it is with Bach that this biblical narrative is most immediately associated in terms of musical works. His *St John Passion* and *St Matthew Passion* have become icons of the passion repertoire, and although Bach also wrote a shorter *Easter Oratorio*, it is specifically the passion events – the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, rather than the resurrection – that the composer focused on with such intensity.

The works MacMillan composed between 1992 and 1998, beginning with *Veni, Veni Emmanuel*, also reveal a period of particular concentration on the events of the Easter Triduum (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Saturday 'Vigil'). Such works include: the three works that make up *Triduum (The World's Ransoming)*, Cello Concerto and Symphony 'Vigil'; a response to the Stations of the Cross with *Fourteen Little Pictures*; musical interpretations of poetic responses to the crucifixion in *Seven Last Words from the Cross* and the text of the Stabat Mater that permeates the drama of his first opera, *Inés de Castro*; a reflection of the Good Friday practice of the Veneration of the Cross in *Kiss on Wood*; and works focusing on the resurrection in *Visitatio Sepulchri*, *They saw the Stone had been rolled away*, *Lumen Christi* and *Exsultet*. Although it was in the last decade of the twentieth century that MacMillan's works were particularly dominated by this religious subject, it returned several years later with a setting of *Tenebrae Responses* in 2006, and the *St John Passion* the following year.

MacMillan's *St John Passion* is a work of considerable duration and requires large musical forces: lasting approximately ninety minutes, it employs one baritone solo (Christ), a small 'narrator' chorus, a larger chorus (professional chorus minimum eighty voices, amateur chorus minimum one-hundred-and-twenty voices) a large orchestra and a chamber organ. The music is complex and especially challenging for the larger chorus when the performers are amateur rather than

professional singers. It is, however, not designed specifically for the concert hall, contrary to rather misleading title of British theologian Hugh Pyper's paper, 'Crucifixion in the Concert Hall: Secular and Sacred in James MacMillan's *Passion of St John*.' While Pyper concentrates solely on the work's premiere, which did indeed take place in the secular context of London's Barbican concert hall, the piece has since been performed in various sacred spaces, including a high-profile Good Friday performance from the chapel of King's College, Cambridge, broadcast live on BBC Radio 3,¹ and MacMillan's passion lends itself to both sacred and secular performance spaces.

Although all the Gospel accounts of the passion are subject to anti-semitic interpretations, St John's account in particular makes itself vulnerable to this criticism. MacMillan explained that he chose this Gospel over the other three simply because it is the one with which he is most familiar, since it is this version that is recited in the Catholic liturgy every year on Good Friday. Nevertheless, the decision to use this account led to some criticisms in the press of anti-semitism, and this was exacerbated by MacMillan's insertion of the Reproaches in the penultimate movement. These comprise Jesus' questioning of the Jews, such as: 'O my people, what have I done to offend you so? Answer me!' It should be noted that this is not included in St John's passion account and is therefore a related but distinct text. However, it should also be stressed that these are, like St John's passion account itself, part of the Catholic Good Friday liturgy each year. In other words, the use of this Gospel and the inclusion of the Reproaches merely reflect MacMillan's Catholic tradition, rather than any ulterior motive. Furthermore, the composer has mentioned the significance of these texts in the Good Friday liturgy as a reminder of Christianity's Jewish heritage, and this is an aspect he deemed too important to omit from his musical setting:

¹ This took place on Friday 2 April 2010 at 7pm. The performers were: Mark Stone (Christus), the Choir of King's College, the Philharmonia Chorus and the BBC Concert Orchestra, conducted by Stephen Cleobury.

They are not the words of Christ but I included these extra texts just as Bach punctuates his Passion with Lutheran chorales... A whole movement is devoted to the Reproaches, which are based on the Hebrew Bible, the books of Micah and Isaiah, and also use phrases from the Psalms. They take into account our Jewish heritage and remind us where we have come from.²

MacMillan's interest in and respect for Jewish tradition had been expressed in earlier works, such as his Second String Quartet, *Why is this Night Different?* (1998), whose title refers to the night of Cedar in the Jewish tradition, which followed the exodus out of Egypt: "Here the family celebrate the flight of the Children of Israel from Egypt. The youngest present asks 'Why is this night different from all other nights?' before the father relates the tale of flight and liberation from slavery".³ In addition, Pyper has defended MacMillan against claims of anti-semitism in his *St John Passion* by mentioning another of MacMillan's works inspired by Jewish mythology, *Raising Sparks*.⁴

MacMillan claims to follow the Bachian model of interpolating the various sections of the passion Gospel with poetic commentary as an inspiration for his own settings, but to some extent this pays undue credit to Bach, and it would be erroneous to assume that Bach was the originator of this multi-textual concept. With reference to Bach's *St John Passion*, whose librettist remains a contentious point, Dürer reminds us that borrowing from the work of other poets or preachers was the rule rather than the exception in Bach's time, as in the case of Picander for the libretto of the *St Matthew Passion*.⁵ MacMillan refers to both Bach's passions when discussing the notion of additional texts. Bach's *St Matthew Passion* was composed in 1727, while his *St John Passion* dates from 1724. Both of them were written after numerous passion settings which adopted a similar structure: prior to Bach's two accounts, other musical interpretations of Brockes' passion libretto, the so-called

² MacMillan in Twiston-Davies, *The Times*, 9.4.09: <<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article6063170.ece>>

³ MacMillan, 1998: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Why-is-this-night-different/3628>>

⁴ Pyper, 2009: 350.

⁵ Dürer, 2000: 41.

Brockes-Passion or *Der für die Sünde der Welt gemarterte und sterbende Jesus*, were composed⁶, and this passion libretto was one of the main sources for Bach's *St John Passion*, together with free texts by Christian Heinrich Postel.⁷ However the notion of weaving various sacred texts into the fabric of a single passion Gospel had been practiced in Lutheran Germany over a century before Brockes' libretto: particularly important for its influence on the Lutheran passion *historia* is the Latin Passion printed by Georg Rhaw in 1538 under the name of Jakob Obrecht. This work is based chiefly on the Passion according to St Matthew, but it also draws on the other Gospels to include the seven last words of Christ.⁸

Although many composers before Bach included additional texts into their versions of the passion, MacMillan cites Bach as his source of inspiration – understandably so, given the prominence of the latter's two settings. In addition to imitating Bach's/Picander's treatment of texts, MacMillan's retrospection to the *St Matthew Passion* also manifests itself musically through the quotation of a particular chorale. Bach uses this chorale five times throughout the *St Matthew Passion*, subjecting it to various harmonic treatments: 'Erkenne mich, mein Huter', 'Ich will bei hier dir stehen'; 'Befiehl du deine Wege'; 'O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden'; and 'Wenn ich einmal soll scheiden'. It is the penultimate chorale of these five, 'O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden', which has become particularly well-known in Britain in its English version (set to the same melody): 'O Sacred head, sore wounded', and it is with reference to this sombre image that MacMillan briefly but explicitly quotes the first phrase of this chorale from the *St Matthew Passion* for the text 'your sacred head is wounded':

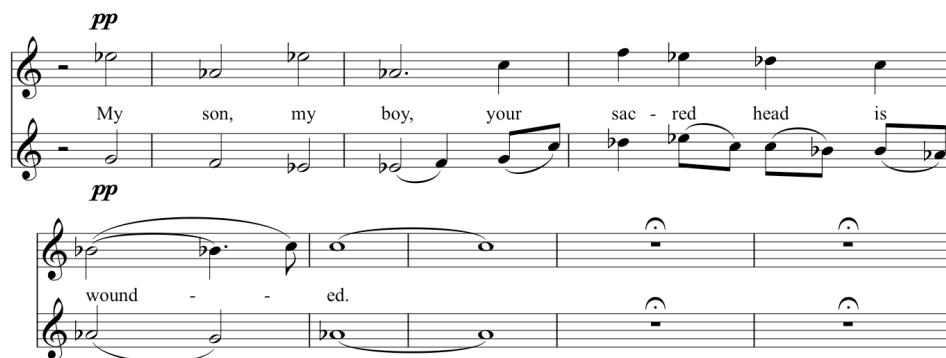
⁶ The Brockes-Passion was set to music by numerous composers of the German Baroque period, including: Telemann (1716), Handel (1715-6), Keiser (1712), Mattheson (1718) and Fasch (1723).

⁷ Steinitz, 1979: 28-9.

⁸ Smither, 1977: 5-8.



Ex. 4.1 Bach: *St Matthew Passion*, No. 54 Chorale: 'O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden', bb. 1-5



Ex. 4.2 MacMillan: *St John Passion*, Movement VII, bb. 89-97 (soprano parts only)

Toward the end of Chapter Three, MacMillan's early folk-style ballad *The Tryst* was discussed, specifically its transformation from a romantic love song for his wife into a love song for the Church in the *St Anne's Mass*. This song is worth mentioning again here, for MacMillan uses the end of his *St John Passion* as a kind of final chorale, following Bach's example in his own passions (See Exx. 3.22 and 3.23). He has used the melody of *The Tryst* in several works, but its place within the context of the *St Anne's Mass* is the reason for its longevity. It is through its association with congregations that the melody has become so well known, not least because it is published in *Laudate*⁹, a popular hymnbook, widely disseminated across not only Catholic churches but also in other Christian denominations in the UK. Its inclusion in this book has facilitated its considerable and widespread popularity among parishioners.

This theme appears audibly and triumphantly as a brass chorale in the purely orchestral concluding movement of MacMillan's *St John*

⁹ MacMillan's Sanctus from the *St Anne's Mass* is Hymn No. 586 in: *Laudate*, 1999. Stephen Dean (ed.) Suffolk: Decani Music.

Passion. By the time he completed this oratorio, congregations had been singing the Sanctus of the *St Anne's Mass* for over two decades, and it became familiar to many. In the context of the *Passion* therefore, it is reasonable to interpret it in almost exactly the same as Bach's chorales in his settings of the St John and St Matthew Passions, as well as his numerous cantatas: a clear 'beacon' of aural recognition for the congregation/audience.

In addition to textual interpolations and musical affiliations with Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, MacMillan's *St John Passion*, or rather a specific performance of this work in Amsterdam, strengthens the relationship between his and Bach's settings. MacMillan's *St John Passion* was placed very much 'in the footsteps' of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* when it was premiered in Amsterdam in 2009, replacing the annual performance of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, a tradition that had existed for more than a century: "Easter and the [Bach] *St Matthew Passion* are inextricably linked in the Netherlands. It is a tradition which began in 1891 when Julius Röntgen performed the *St Matthew Passion* with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra for the first time. From 1899 onwards, Willem Mengelberg ensured that it became an annual event".¹⁰

Religious Liturgies, Old and New: Composing for Congregations

Both MacMillan's and Bach's outputs are dominated by sacred works, written not merely for the sake of convenience but because of a strong religious commitment and theological understanding. The passion settings of each composer reflect this explicitly. MacMillan's *St John Passion* is a musical expression of an integral and important part of his Catholicism. When he was interviewed about the work in *The Times* newspaper, the title of the article, taken from the interview, was 'My Art

¹⁰ This quotation was taken from the Radio Netherlands Worldwide Website: <<http://www.rnw.nl/english/radioshow/st-matthew-passion-a-tradition-development>>

is shaped by my Faith'.¹¹ This attitude was true for Bach also, and it would be erroneous to claim that Bach considered the Lutheran Church as simply a suitable 'employer'. Friedrich Blume famously and fervently promoted this mistaken hypothesis in 1962, arguing that Bach was a church composer out of convenience rather than commitment.¹² This theory was exploded when Bach's bible, now in the Ludwig Fuerbringer Library of Concordia Seminary, St Louis, Missouri, was first put on public display at the Heidelberg Bachfest in 1969. Considering the copious marginalia and underlining in his bible, in conjunction with the contents of Bach's theological library, it seems unequivocal that the composer's attachment to Lutheranism was more than just convenient.¹³ Although the Lutheran Church was Bach's employer, it would be inaccurate to claim that he accidentally became an advocate for this faith in the same way that various twentieth-century professional choirs have by singing sacred choral music. Like MacMillan, Bach's art expresses a potent religious commitment.

An integral part of Bach's and MacMillan's religious convictions, especially as writers of liturgical music, were the reforms of the Lutheran Church and the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church respectively, both of which encouraged the active participation of the congregation in services. When considering MacMillan in conjunction with Eisler and Andriessen in Chapter One, a brief reference to MacMillan's stylistic change when writing for congregations was made. It is in the context of Bach that this compositional shift may now be explored in greater detail. While his secular amateur music retains his distinctive authorship in its style, MacMillan's enthusiasm for the religious amateur musician – the congregation – has led him to write in a completely different manner. The Bachian comparison with MacMillan is perhaps the most obvious with regard to the 'musician as craftsman', since the nature of each composer's participation in this

¹¹ Twiston-Davies, 2009: *The Times*.

¹² Blume, Friedrich. 1963.

¹³ Leaver, 1997: 39-40.

functional music is very similar: 'new music'¹⁴ written each week for a religious context, with each composer accompanying the congregation on the organ. In the case of Bach, this resulted in a new cantata each week, often with the intention that the congregation would sing in the chorales usually included at the end; in the case of MacMillan, a new congregational psalm-setting is written each week. The verses of these psalms are to be sung by a small choir, directed by the composer, with the congregation joining in the response which he teaches them several minutes before the start of the mass.

There are two important points of distinction to be made between these weekly, liturgical works of Bach and those of MacMillan: aurally-recognisable authorship; and social interaction. Varied though they may be, Bach's cantatas – of which 209 are known to exist – can clearly be recognized as the composer's work. He made no stylistic concessions in his cantatas, integrating the simple, Lutheran chorales into often-complex harmonies. Indeed, there are claims that Bach's treatment of chorales was so complicated that the congregation found it difficult to participate.¹⁵ Bach seemed more concerned with enhancing the text through musical means, rather than placing active participation as his main objective. However, this does not mean he did not take the varying technical abilities of performers into consideration:

Whatever the limitations and difficulties of his job, Bach claims that he selects music – at least for his second choir – primarily '*according to the capabilities*' of the available performers, rather than, as the received Romantic notion would have it, being forced by circumstance to tolerate weekly travesties of music *beyond* their grasp.¹⁶

The music was therefore functional, in that it served the Lutheran liturgy, but the constant arguments in which Bach and the senior members of the Lutheran Church engaged suggest a composer who anticipates Lydia Goehr's 'work-concept' of 1800, for he was clearly

¹⁴ This is not to suggest wholly original musical material. Much of each composer's contributions in this area comprises a re-working/reharmonization of pre-existing material: in the case of Bach, chorales; in the case of MacMillan, folk melodies.

¹⁵ Wolff et al. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40023pg10>>

¹⁶ Parrott, 2000: 19.

concerned with 'the musical work' itself. If he were not, he would have adopted a more servile manner and changed his music accordingly. Unlike MacMillan, Bach refused to relinquish his musical voice for the sake of the religious community. In effect then, Bach's and MacMillan's liturgical music invert Goehr's work-concept, with the pre-1800 composer writing 'musical works' and the twenty-first century composer writing 'functional music'.¹⁷

However, it is worth stressing that MacMillan does not draw a line of distinction between these two styles of music, and his functional, liturgical music is clearly intended to be considered alongside his oeuvre of compositions. This is supported by the increased publication of his simple psalm settings and the *Strathclyde Motets*. Another reason that supports the incorporation of these works into MacMillan's oeuvre is his re-use of themes from congregational works into his more 'serious', concert hall works, most notably the aforementioned Sanctus from the *St Anne's Mass* at the end of the *St John Passion*, and the main musical theme running throughout the *Galloway Mass* that is heard in the concluding movement of the clarinet concerto, *Ninian*.

Despite this relationship between MacMillan's congregational style and his more typical concert-hall style, a distinction remains according to Goehr's work concept. Although they share the apparently similar duty of writing weekly music for liturgical use therefore, Bach and MacMillan have almost opposing motives in mind: the former takes deliberately simple music, chorales, and changes their inclusive nature by adding complex harmonies; the latter writes original, simple music, composed in a style utterly atypical of his other music ('works'), with

¹⁷ In Chapter Four of *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 'The Central Claim', Goehr puts forward and defines the 'work concept', which distinguishes the perception of pieces of music pre- and post-1800. She argues that audiences – and indeed composers – did not consider music in terms of 'works of art' which would contribute to an evolving canon, but that pieces were written for immediate, functional use, with little or no thought of long-term posterity. Goehr also claims that pre-1800 pieces were not reified or held with the level of respect and awe as later works, from the nineteenth century on. Beethoven, marking the birth of the Romantic era, is considered as the turning-point in this perception of music. See Goehr, 1992: 89-119.

the salient purpose of writing music appropriate for congregational singing.

MacMillan and Bach are united in their common concern for a sense of solemnity and respect in the music of the liturgy, and it was perhaps Bach's circumstances that caused him to write music that was of a high musical standard but not necessarily always appropriate on a practical level. In his Mülhausen resignation letter, he made such a strong case for his "ultimate goal of a well-regulated church music", and expressed such a keen interest in getting more involved in vocal music that his voluntary withdrawal from it would be hard to imagine, even though his official duties in Arnstadt and Mülhausen were primarily focused on organ music.¹⁸

MacMillan's *Mass*, written for the choir of Westminster Cathedral in 2000, closely resembles the Bachian model of liturgical music. Like Bach's cantatas and their inclusion of chorales, MacMillan's *Mass* includes sections for the congregation to join in with the choir. Of the six mass settings he had written by 2010, the *Missa Brevis* and *Missa Dunelmi* include no parts for congregation, while the *St Anne's Mass*, *Galloway Mass* and *Mass of Blessed John Henry Newman* are specifically congregational and with a much simpler musical language. With his *Mass* however, MacMillan wrote in his more usual style but integrated the congregation also. This mass-involvement was certainly a concern of Bach and the Lutheran tradition in general, where chorales provided a link between more sophisticated music and that understood and participated in by the people. A study of the origins of the chorales Bach used in the Passions reveals that he restricted himself not only to those that were associated with Passiontide, but also to those that were well known, for many of them – both words and music – were published in or near Leipzig.¹⁹ Although MacMillan's *Mass* includes parts for the congregation to join in (with the choir), it is still impractical for regular use, given its extreme technical demands. Martin Baker, Master of Music

¹⁸ Wolff, 2000: 124.

¹⁹ Steinitz, 1979: 24.

at Westminster Cathedral, has said the Mass is very difficult to rehearse in the time allotted, “which explains the relative infrequency with which we sing it. This is often a problem with commissions: they can turn out to be “occasion” pieces that need a disproportionate time for rehearsal.”²⁰

Writing for amateur performers was a major interest for MacMillan’s British predecessors, many of whom also cited Bach as a model for such music. Vaughan Williams claimed that “it is better to be vitally parochial than to be an emasculate cosmopolitan. The great names in music were at first local and the greatest of all, John Sebastian Bach, remained a local musician all his life”.²¹ However, to be a local musician, or even to write for local amateur musicians, is very different to actively deciding to write for amateur musicians. In Bach’s time, religious establishments (in his case, the Lutheran Church) were the major source of income for composers. The fact that Bach “remained a local musician”, writing for the local community, must therefore be considered very differently from the attitude of Vaughan Williams.

This is not to imply that Bach did not wish to include the congregation, and although he may not have been motivated by the socialist agenda of Vaughan Williams, Bach was nevertheless inspired by the teachings and liturgical reforms of Luther, which included a greater degree of active participation from the congregation. From Trinity 1724, possibly as a gesture specifically towards integrating the congregation, Bach began one of his most ambitious projects: a series of some forty chorale cantatas.²² Old, traditional chorale texts remained to allow a degree of familiarity to the parish as the new melodies were introduced. It is evident that, like Vaughan Williams, Bach wished to encourage musical performance from people of all standards, but not at the expense of the musical work.

This same ethos was shared by one of MacMillan’s older Catholic contemporaries, Ernst Krenek (1900-1991), who was unwilling to

²⁰ Baker, via email 4.9.08.

²¹ Vaughan Williams, 2008: 81.

²² Williams, 2007: 189.

compromise his rigorously modernist style for the sake of congregational participation. Krenek's mass settings were not products of political motivations, but were composed in response to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) which, for the first time, placed a significant emphasis on active congregational participation, including liturgical music. Krenek and MacMillan have both written extensively for the Catholic Church and the concert hall, but unlike Krenek – and unlike Bach also – there is a sharp distinction between MacMillan's congregational music and his other music, not only with regard to technical difficulty but to style as well. In terms of style, MacMillan's mass settings exist at the other end of the spectrum from Krenek: while the latter refused to 'soften' his modernist musical language for such purposes, the former abandons it altogether, placing the practicality of encouraging a large group of people to sing above artistic considerations. It may seem surprising or even disappointing that although MacMillan is able to maintain his compositional voice when writing for amateur instrumentalists, as in *Northern Skies*, he resorts to a much simpler language in his congregational music. The Celtic element so distinctive in MacMillan's works is retained, but all other aspects of his compositional palette are omitted. This is something MacMillan himself is aware of, and in talks and conferences he has frequently mentioned the necessity to 'leave the compositional ego in the church porch'.

The reason for this is the standard of the musicians he is writing for. When composing for an instrumentalist, even at the most basic level, certain skills can be assumed: a musical ear, the ability to read simple music, some degree of musical sensitivity. None of these can be assumed of congregation members, some of whom may have had no musical training whatsoever. Everything must therefore be attractive and memorable enough to be learned by ear alone, and within a limited amount of time. The decision to write 'egoless', ultra-simplified music is therefore at least partly a reflection of the times in which MacMillan writes, and the poor standard of congregational singing in the Catholic

church. However, this inclusive, quasi-socialist stance represents only one side of MacMillan's approach to liturgical music, for in addition to this 'egoless' music, he has also championed the return of an older and altogether different liturgical practice, where congregational participation was relatively minimal: the Tridentine Rite.

Retrospective Liturgy: The Tridentine Rite

Since the appointment of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as Pope Benedict XVI in 2005, MacMillan became more vocal in expressing a concern between the ancient and modern in Catholicism. This concern was not directed at any theological message, as in the case of Liberation Theology, but refers to the nature of religious liturgy, and specifically its music. Dejected by the ever-increasing liberalism of the political Left, MacMillan became morally and politically conservative as he entered middle-age, and this is reflected in his attitude towards religious politics as well. When Benedict XVI sanctioned the return of the Extraordinary Form (the Tridentine Rite), the Latin mass used prior the Second Vatican Council, many Catholics opposed this move. MacMillan strongly defended the pontiff's decision in a number of articles, arguing that after the "terrible mistakes" that occurred after the Second Vatican Council, including a "de-poeticisation, de-sacralisation, and general dumbing down of the Church's sacred praise", a more respectful and solemn type of congregational music might be restored.²³

There is a double-retrospection referred to here: looking back to the "terrible mistakes" of the Second Vatican Council in the late 1960s; and the reinstitution of the liturgical rite that was used before the Second Vatican Council. About this topic, the composer made the following statement:

Vatican II was not the start of a new church, as some might have it. It was a renewal of what was there, and not some revolution that happened for no good reason. It was not

²³ MacMillan, *The Times*, 15.5.09: <<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article6296328.ece?token=null&offset=12&page=2>>

the Catholic Church beginning again in some 'Year Zero' convulsion - there was no rupture with the past - and we should always challenge those deluded souls who imagine it was. It was an affirmation and confirmation of a Catholicism standing firmly in a 2000 year Tradition. And it is our Tradition, rather than some pathetic pseudo-Marxist kidology that points us forward. This explains why the Pope, in his brilliant *Motu Proprio*, *Summorum Pontificum* of 2007, rehabilitated the Extraordinary Form of the Mass... [and] gifted the Old Rite back to the wider church to its grateful musicians".²⁴

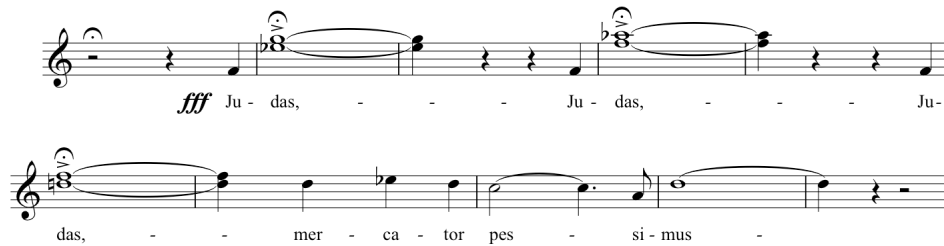
Although this promotion of the ancient rite may be interpreted as clinging on to the past, MacMillan is demanding not so much a re-instatement of 'old models' as a re-examination of Vatican II's teachings, and to interpret it in an evolutionary rather than revolutionary manner. Again, as with the 'Scotland's Shame' speech, the references to Marxism are clearly evident, and tradition is once again paramount to his argument, including the musical traditions of pre-Vatican II liturgies.

In 2010, MacMillan wrote an article prominently featuring an eight-point 'liturgical wish-list' he had received from an anonymous Catholic student. Although these eight points are not MacMillan's own, the composer describes the list as "clear-headed, moderate and sensible", and therefore it is reasonable to assume he endorses the points made. With the exception of points five and seven, which refer to sacred texts and church notices respectively, all the points concern the music of the liturgy. An edited version of the eight points, excluding points five and seven, is included in Appendix K. Many of these reforms explicitly refer to historical musical models, such as plainchant and professional choral music. These are models for which MacMillan has the greatest respect. Appendix C1 indicates the significant number of MacMillan's works which include plainchant, while the music of Catholic Renaissance composers such as Victoria features in his *St John Passion*:

²⁴ MacMillan, *Scottish Catholic Observer*, 15.5.09. This article, entitled 'Vatican II was not Church's "year zero"' was not made available online, but the content quoted here can be found at: <<http://www.catholictruthscotland.com/blog/tag/sacred-music/>>



Ex. 4.3 Victoria: *Responses for Tenebrae on Maundy Thursday, 'Judas mercator'*, bb. 1-7



Ex. 4.4 MacMillan: *St John Passion, Movement IV*, bb. 491-8 (soprano parts only)

MacMillan makes use of almost all of Victoria's soprano line for this response in his own setting of the same text (except for the words "Denariorum mimevo"), even imitating Victoria's alternations between full choir and pared down vocal writing, as for the text "Melius illi erat si natus non fuisset". In addition, with regard to point six of the 'liturgical wish-list', silence in the liturgy, MacMillan has explored the relationship between God and silence in his Symphony No. 3 'Silence', and the long pauses in works such as *Seven Last Words from the Cross* also reveal the transcendent quality of silence, as in the rests between the statements of "Woman! Behold thy son" and "Father" at the opening of the second and seventh movements respectively.

It is with reference to the reforms of Vatican II that Messiaen should be briefly mentioned once again. Messiaen is a composer MacMillan holds in great esteem, and *Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum* in particular is a piece he returns to time and again: not only does it feature in both his 'private passions' choices in 1996 and 2009 (see Appendix B), but the composer has also conducted the work on several occasions. As Richard McGregor has pointed out, 'a sense of the abyss' is a recurring image in MacMillan's vocabulary when talking about his music, and McGregor comments that this evokes resonances with the religious ideas of Messiaen, who MacMillan considers to be 'the

most vivid pointer to the sacred'.²⁵ McGregor explains in a footnote that the Messiaen reference to the notion of 'the abyss' is found in the composer's programme note to *Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum*.

It is perhaps somewhat predictable that Messiaen's response to the musical changes taking place as a result of Vatican II were similar to MacMillan's complaints about the current state of liturgical music in the Catholic Church. Although Messiaen was not actively involved on an institutional level in the application of liturgical reform, he did participate in the first session of the commission presided over by Monsignor Delarue, during which church musicians such as Gaston Litaize, Jean Langlais and Messiaen himself argued that the 'active participation' of the congregation in the liturgy was a threat to the well-established musical tradition.²⁶ Messiaen's career as a church musician was marked by conflict, since although he was a committed Catholic and never considered breaking away from the Church, he also never renounced his conviction that Gregorian chant was the only musical style that qualified as liturgical.²⁷ Both Bach and MacMillan experienced similar conflicts, though the connection between MacMillan and Messiaen is particularly strong in this respect, not only because of their common Catholicism, but because they were/are both affected by the same historical reform: the Second Vatican Council.

In defending liturgical music, Messiaen referred to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Council's document on the liturgy, placing great emphasis on articles 36, 54 and 116, which stipulated the use of Latin texts and Gregorian chant, in particular for the parts of the Ordinary of the Mass sung by the congregation.²⁸ In an article written for the *Catholic Herald* newspaper in 2006, entitled 'Bad Music is destroying the Church', MacMillan turned to the very same source, and indeed concluded his article with several extracts from this document, including an extract from article 116, which Messiaen had referred to.

²⁵ McGregor, 2010: 97.

²⁶ Heller, 2010: 75.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

Given that this source has now become relatively obscure, and that both composers refer to it in support of their arguments for maintaining a high musical standard in the liturgy, it is worth considering several of the extracts selected by MacMillan:

The treasury of sacred music is to be preserved and cultivated with great care. Choirs must be assiduously developed. (SC, Chapter 6, Section 14)

Choirs are to be developed with great care, especially in cathedrals and other major churches, in seminaries and in religious houses of study. (b) In smaller churches as well a choir should be formed, even if there are only a few members. (MS, Part 2, Section 19)

The Church recognises Gregorian Chant as being especially suited to the Roman liturgy. Therefore it should be given pride of place in liturgical services. (SC, Chapter 6, Section 116)

Other kinds of music, especially polyphony are by no means excluded. (SC, Chapter 6, Section 116)²⁹

Needless to say, congregational participation in the eighteenth-century Lutheran Church was far less of a concern for Bach than congregational participation in the late twentieth-century Catholic Church was for Messiaen and MacMillan. Although Bach wrote for congregations, this was not at the expense of choral music, nor organ music, nor music with Latin texts, but was composed in addition to these more sophisticated genres.

Having been asked by Brigitte Massin whether or not he would appreciate the epithet ‘the Bach of modern times’, Messiaen replied: “I suppose I ought to take it as a very great compliment. It would be undeserved”. When asked by Massin whether he could detect a resemblance between himself and the Leipzig Kappellmeister, his answer was a categorical “No, not at all”.³⁰ One of the reasons Messiaen stressed this distinction was surely due to the nature of each composer’s duties in the weekly Sunday worship. Like Bach, but unlike Messiaen, MacMillan takes into consideration modern concerns, including the hostility exhibited by some parishioners towards the use

²⁹ MacMillan, *The Catholic Herald*, 20.10.06.

³⁰ Bannister, 2010: 33.

of Latin texts, which form an integral part of Gregorian chant, Messiaen's preferred liturgical music. Although he may favour the reverence and solemnity of the ancient Tridentine Rite, MacMillan's strong commitment to the inclusion of the congregation in the liturgy has already been made evident. This is very much in accordance with the doctrines of the Second Vatican Council, whereas the Tridentine Rite places much greater emphasis upon individual worship with the liturgy of the mass. Reconciling these two polarised liturgical worlds is difficult, if not impossible, and herein lies the fundamental tension in MacMillan's religious retrospective modernism. Given his staunch support of the ancient Tridentine Rite, it must be assumed that MacMillan's extensive contribution to congregational music is a type of compromise: in appreciating that the Tridentine Rite will only return in certain parishes, the composer feels an obligation to support the majority of parishes by continuing to write for their congregations.

It should be stressed that MacMillan's first two congregational settings, the *St Anne's Mass* and the *Galloway Mass* were written *before* the appointment of Cardinal Ratzinger as Pope. It is somewhat ironic that MacMillan's third congregational setting was written for this pope's visit to Britain in 2010: a work written for an extraordinarily large congregation to join in, sung for the visit of a pope and written by a composer, both of whom promote the antithesis of such a liturgy. However, this irony is not as pronounced as it may seem initially, for just as liturgical events vary considerably in nature, so must the nature of the liturgy (including the music) accompany them appropriately. The sense of writing for an occasion is important to MacMillan, and it would have been unsuitable to have written a purely choral work, knowing how many people would be present at such a public and high-profile event, and therefore knowing how many people would be excluded from actively taking part in the sung parts of the mass.

This liturgical adaptability was also true for Bach, to an extent. As with the differences between the pre- and post-Vatican II liturgical rites within the Catholic Church, Butt reminds us that Luther's

Reformation at the beginning of the sixteenth century is often mistakenly considered to have opposed the liturgy of the Roman church, whereas Luther was far more concerned with reforming doctrine: he by no means decreed that the Latin liturgy should cease in places where it would be readily understood, rather, vernacular alternatives should be available wherever the level of education demanded it.³¹ Thus, Bach wrote Latin masses as well as German cantatas, with chorales in the latter for the congregation to participate in, and MacMillan writes both simple congregational and complex choral music.

He does not defy the teaching of Vatican II altogether, nor does he exclude the congregation from singing. In this liturgical context, describing MacMillan as a 'retrospective modernist' here refers not to modernism but to 'the religious modern', in this case, the relatively modern reforms of Vatican II (modern in comparison to the ancient practice of the Tridentine Rite). More than any other Catholic composer, he has both actively spoken in support of the Tridentine Rite and has contributed extensively to the congregational repertoire.

It may reasonably be argued that the parallel of MacMillan with Bach is challenged by the distinction between choral and congregational styles between the two composers. Bach's musical language for his missae breves is not distinct from the language employed for his cantatas, yet MacMillan's choral music differs greatly from his congregational works. (The *Mass* is an exception, combining parts for both choir and congregation). However, if we consider specifically congregational *participation*, and not merely congregational *comprehension* (textual comprehension, from Latin to the vernacular), the two models do not appear so different. The homophonic language of the chorales intended for congregational participation by Bach is generally simple to sing, and only the underlying harmony occasionally threatens such straightforward music. The same is true of MacMillan: it is merely that the genre is different, so that instead of writing a cantata,

³¹ Butt, 1991: 3.

at the end of which the congregation sings a hymn, he writes psalm settings and mass settings.

Thus, the tension between ancient and modern liturgical rites, in both the Catholic and Lutheran churches, only poses problems to composers unable or unwilling to adapt. For Bach and MacMillan, no tension existed: music was written to suitably accompany whatever liturgical context for which it was intended. The text may be in Latin or in the vernacular, as in Bach's Latin works (*Magnificat*, the *missae breves* and the *Mass in B minor*) and vernacular works (the cantatas, the passions), and MacMillan's six mass settings, two of which are in Latin, the other four in English. Similarly, the music might be complex or simple, according to its performers. To this extent, in a liturgical context MacMillan's retrospective modernism is divided into two categories: retrospection to the Tridentine Rite; and retrospection to the modern (Vatican II) requirement to actively engage the congregation in the music.

There is one significant point of distinction between Bach and MacMillan writing for these different liturgies. While Bach was simply following Luther's reforms, MacMillan was following the reforms of Vatican II, but also seeking to provide an antidote to the guitar-and-tambourine-led music that had become commonplace in post-Vatican II liturgy, as mentioned in the 'liturgical reforms wish-list' in Appendix K. The Catholic Church does not employ MacMillan as Bach was employed by the Lutheran Church, and therefore he is under no obligation to write any congregational music at all, but he does so to counter the pop-culture of post-Vatican II music. At the same time, he welcomes the return of the Tridentine Rite and actively promotes its re-instatement. This respect for past models, both liturgical and musical, was a concern for Bach also, and is made apparent in many of his works. Some of the most potent examples of this are his mass settings, culminating in his *Mass in B minor*, where the composer looks back not only to religious traditions, but also to the music of his younger self.

Recycling: Five Masses and a Cantata

It is well known that Bach's Mass in B minor re-uses music from several of his earlier works. The act of borrowing music from other composers, as well as 'recycling' one's own musical material, has been implemented by composers for centuries. Although the practice flourished throughout the Renaissance, with the numerous 'parody masses' of Ockeghem, Dufay, Palestrina and Victoria, it is the Baroque period that has become particularly associated with musical recycling, due in no small part to the works of Bach and Handel.³² Dean divides the practice of self-borrowing into positive and negative aspects, depending on whether or not the old material stimulates the composer to new feats of invention, revealing his creative processes and his development as an artist.³³ Whereas most of Rossini's self-borrowings tell us little except that he was writing in great haste, those of Gluck and Berlioz show the progression of certain ideas, and in Bach and Handel both these positive (creative) and negative (purely practical) aspects are prominent.³⁴

However, it should be stressed that Bach often shows far greater concern for the continuity of the extramusical subject between his original and recycled works than Handel: while Handel was willing to extract an aria from a secular opera and insert it into a biblical oratorio, Bach sometimes (though by no means always) maintains the associations between the original and new contexts in which the same musical material is shared, almost always to establish a theological connection between the two. This 'associative' recycling (as opposed to 'practical' recycling) either consists of parodying, where an entire piece or movement is reworked into a new context; or smaller-scale

³² From *Agrippina*, examples of recycled material include Pallas's "Col raggio placido", which is based on Lucifer's aria from *La Resurrezione*, and Agrippina's aria "Non hò cor che per amarti" was taken, almost entirely unadapted, from "Se la morte non vorrà" in Handel's earlier dramatic cantata *Qual ti reveglio, oh Dio*; Narcissus's "Spererò" is an adaptation of "Sai perchè" from *Clori, Tirsi e Fileno*; and parts of Nero's Act 3 aria "Come nube che fugge dal vento" are borrowed Handel's oratorio *Il trionfo del tempo*. Later, some of Agrippina's music was used by Handel in his London operas *Rinaldo* and the 1732 version of *Acis and Galatea*, in each case with little or no change from the original source.

³³ Dean, 1960: 238.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

recycling, where a certain section, melody, cadence or other musical reference is reused by the same composer. Thus, while Bach's parodying of the first movement of his *Partita for Solo Violin No. 3 in E* for the opening 'Sinfonia' of the Ascension cantata *Wir danken dir, Gott*, BWV 29 is an example of purely practical recycling, the parodying of an aria from one of his Passiontide cantatas for a movement in one of his Passion oratorios is both practical and associative. In the table below, these examples fall into recycling categories one and two respectively:

Type of Recycling	Definition
Category 1 recycling (parody)	An entire work or movement is reused in an unrelated extramusical context. The recycling is purely for practical reasons.
Category 2 recycling (parody)	For practical and associative reasons, an entire work or movement is reused in another work, whose extramusical context is related or identical to the original work.
Category 3 recycling	A distinctive musical feature (e.g. a melody or a motive) is reused in an unrelated extramusical context. The recycling is purely for practical reasons.
Category 4 recycling	For practical and associative reasons, a distinctive musical feature (e.g. a melody or a motive) is reused in another work, whose extramusical context is related or identical to the original work.
Category 5 recycling (self-quotation)	A distinctive musical feature (e.g. a melody or a motive) is reused in another work specifically to establish an extramusical association.

Table 4.1 Recycling Categories

MacMillan's musical recycling imitates Bach's rather than Rossini's model (whose recyclings almost always fall into category 1), though he does not always do this through musical parody: MacMillan's recyclings generally fall into categories 2, 4 and 5. If we are to examine these more interesting instances of reusing musical material, where the

extramusical topic is continued from one work to another by musical means, it makes sense to consider a specific genre common to the two composers. The mass setting provides a particularly appropriate example, not only because Bach and MacMillan have written multiple mass settings, but because in each of these, the composer extensively recycles musical material from his earlier works and maintains the original, extramusical association.

As mentioned above, by the end of 2010 MacMillan had written six mass settings, three choral and three congregational: *Missa Brevis* (1977, rev. and pub. 2007), choral; *St Anne's Mass* (1985), congregational; *Galloway Mass* (1996), congregational; *Mass* (2000), choral; *Mass of Blessed John Henry Newman* (2010), congregational; and *Missa Dunelmi* (2010), choral. With the exception of the early *Missa Brevis*, all of MacMillan's mass settings include material that he had either used previously in earlier works, or which he took from his mass settings and incorporated into later pieces. The re-use of material in one of these settings has already been referred to at the beginning of this chapter, where the musical relationship between the *St Anne's Mass* and *St John Passion* was briefly mentioned. Because of the important and unique nature position in MacMillan's output, specifically its Sanctus, the *St Anne's Mass* is not discussed in this sub-chapter but is explored at length in conjunction with Mahler in Chapter Five, under the heading 'Recurring Themes'.

Like MacMillan, Bach also wrote five mass settings which re-use musical material, though in his case this was always through the practice of parody (categories 1 and 2). However, because the Sanctus of the *St Anne's Mass* is discussed in the next chapter, it is more appropriate to think of the following discussion as an exploration of 'four-plus-one' rather than five masses: the 'plus one' in Bach's case is the Mass in B minor; in MacMillan, it is the cantata, *Seven Last Words from the Cross*. For reasons that are explained below, these two more substantial works are considered together, even though this does, admittedly, stretch the generic comparison of mass settings.

Bach's four Lutheran missae breves (BWV 233-6) have been regarded as of no great significance because they are essentially re-workings of earlier cantata movements, and it has been argued that this parody procedure demonstrates that Bach was not particularly concerned with their composition.³⁵ However, the problem with this line of reasoning is that the celebrated Mass in B minor, which has been widely praised as a work of superlative quality, also incorporates much parodied material.³⁶ The purpose of parodying cantata movements in his masses is debatable. Leaver asks whether Bach chose to parody music from the cantatas in his mass settings because he wanted the mass and cantata on a special occasion to be thematically related, such as the Missa in G major (BWV 236) and the cantata *Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild* (BWV 79), with two movements in common, which could have been performed together in the same service on Reformation Day, or not?³⁷ Given Bach's strong interest in theology, in addition to a profound ability in the word painting of religious texts, it is at least reasonable to assume that such parodies were made for the works' shared theological concerns. Appendix E2 indicates the sources from which the four missae breves parody, and this is also shown diagrammatically, with the addition of the Mass in B minor and its original sources, in the timeline-network in Appendix E1.

Just as Leaver recommends exercising caution in assuming a deliberate extramusical connection between works by Bach that share musical material, it would be rash to claim that every instance of reused material in MacMillan's religious works necessarily presents an intended theological connection, even though this is often the case. An example of where it is *not* the case is clearly evident in MacMillan's congregational mass for Pope Benedict XVI's visit to Britain in 2010, *Mass of Blessed John Henry Newman*. MacMillan parodies the Agnus Dei of this mass in the second movement of his concertino for trumpet and

³⁵ Leaver, 1997: 90.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Leaver, 1997: 114.

strings, *Seraph*, written in the same year. This begins at the beginning of the movement with a solo violin:

Ex. 4.5 MacMillan: *Mass of Blessed John Henry Newman*, bb. 7-13 (choir part only)

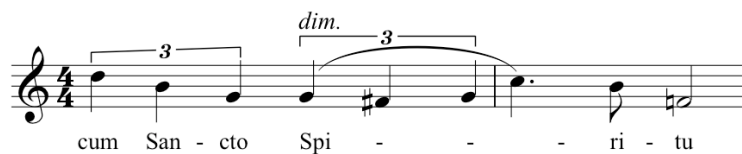
Ex. 4.6 MacMillan: *Seraph*, bb. 6-9 (solo violin part only)

This is a rare occurrence of a category 1 recycling in MacMillan's work. Even though both works have religious connotations, there is no specific connection between the imagery of Jesus as the Lamb of God (Agnus Dei) and a type of angel (seraph). In addition, *Seraph* was written at a time when the composer was increasingly reluctant to give programmatic titles to his works.³⁸ He had originally intended to call the piece 'Concertino for Trumpet and Strings', but Alison Balsom, the trumpeter for whom the work was written, wanted a more expressive and descriptive title.³⁹ In its conception and composition, the work was so removed from anything specifically extramusical that the composer could not produce an alternative title, and even asked the author for a suggestion. Since some of his other concertos had single-word titles, often with a religious connection (*Ninian*, *Epiclesis*), and given the

³⁸ *Oboe Concerto*, written in the same year, is a case in point, as is *Violin Concerto*, written the previous year.

³⁹ MacMillan, via email: 14.7.10.

trumpet's biblical association with angels, I suggested "Gabriel", and MacMillan eventually chose 'Seraph'. This anecdotal episode stresses the exaggerated significance that can easily be placed upon the title of a work, and reveals the strong-musical but weak-extramusical connection between *Seraph* and *Mass of Blessed John Henry Newman*. The same is true of the text "cum Sancto Spiritu" from the end of the Gloria movement in the *Missa Dunelmi*. This briefly but explicitly quotes material from the resurrection-themed 'sacred opera', *Visitatio Sepulchri*, even though there is little or no apparent connection between the events of the resurrection and praising God "with the Holy Spirit":



Ex. 4.7 MacMillan: *Missa Dunelmi*, 'Gloria', bb. 96-7 (soprano part only)

In MacMillan's other mass settings however, the musical connections between other works are much more theologically-centred, as the relationship between the fourth movement of the *a capella* work *Sun-dogs* and *Mass* demonstrates. This is an example of category 5 recycling, where practical intentions are replaced by a desire to establish a musical and theological connection between the two works: it is therefore an example of self-quotation. The penultimate movement of *Sun-dogs* acts as the climax of the work's five movements, containing the most memorable (and most repeated) musical material. This material has a particular significance, not only because it is repeated over and over within this movement, but also because MacMillan had used this music six years previously for his *Mass*.⁴⁰ The material in question is very simple, comprising a plainchant-like melodic line in two halves, supported an organ, whose part changes with each repetition of the chant but always finishes each statement by playing in thirds with the vocal melody:

⁴⁰ Written for the Martin Baker and the Choir of Westminster Cathedral for the new millennium (2000).

Let your spirit come upon these gifts to make them ho - - ly

so that they may become the body and blood of our Lord Je - sus Christ.

Ex. 4.8 MacMillan: *Mass*, 'Eucharistic Prayer II', bb. 3-4

The second half of this chant (A-G#-F#-G#-F#) is also sung by the choir's trebles (in thirds) in the responses in the Kyrie, then later in the Memorial Acclamations.

Lord, - - have mer - cy,

Ex. 4.9 MacMillan: *Mass*, 'Kyrie', bb. 72-4

The recurrence of this motif at different stages provides a cohering thread throughout the mass, in a similar, though less rigid manner than the movements of the *Galloway Mass*, which all share the same melody. However, the above melody from the *Mass* is most extensively utilized throughout the parts sung by the celebrant, such as the Preface and the Eucharistic Prayer (as in the example above) and it is with reference

specifically to the celebrant's singing of this melody that the connection with *Sun-dogs* is made apparent.

This link concerns MacMillan's response to the theological implications of Michael Symmons Roberts' text. At the lines "One offers bread, part chewed, soft with saliva; the other a punctured orange, sweet spittle matting on the soft hair round its muzzle", MacMillan understands the reference to the Eucharist. In order to express this musically, he made two quotations, one musical, one textual. It is worth noting that the very stark change in style that MacMillan employs for the words said by Jesus⁴¹ is not quoted in *Sun-dogs*. The following example shows this transition from the repetitive chant style to the relatively elaborate line for Christ's words:

Ex. 4.10 MacMillan: *Mass*, 'Eucharistic Prayer II', bb. 8-12

Instead of quoting this material however, MacMillan re-uses the chant-like music that dominates the remainder of the Eucharistic Prayer (see Ex. 4.8 above) for the fourth movement of *Sun-dogs*:

⁴¹ "Take this all of you and eat. This is my body, which will be given up for you/Take this all of you and drink it. This is my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all, so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me."

Chamber choir *mp - mf*

One offers bread, part chewed, soft with sa - li - va;
The other a punctured orange, sweet spittle matting on the soft hair round its muz - zle

Ex. 4.11 MacMillan: *Sun-dogs*, Movement IV, bb. 25-26 (chamber choir part only)

The second, textual quotation he makes to emphasise this Eucharistic connection is heard sung by the members of the choir who are not singing the text “One offers bread...” While a chamber group within the choir sings this chant repeatedly, the remainder sings the sustained harmony (taken by the organ in the *Mass*) to a very fast, audibly incomprehensible repeated text of Christ’s words from the Eucharistic Prayer in Latin (“Take this all of you and eat it...” “Accipite et manducate ex hoc omnes...”):

Chamber choir
S on the soft hair round its muz - zle. One offers bread, part chewed, soft with
A
T
B

other choir
S facite in eam commemorationem. Accipite et manducate ex hoc omnes: hoc est enim corpus meum,
A facite in eam commemorationem. Accipite et manducate ex hoc omnes: hoc est enim corpus meum,
T facite in eam commemorationem. Accipite et manducate ex hoc omnes: hoc est enim corpus meum,
B facite in eam commemorationem. Accipite et manducate ex hoc omnes: hoc est enim corpus meum,

Ex. 4.12 MacMillan: *Sun-dogs*, Movement IV, bb. 24-5

CHOIR ONLY

ff

Tr. *A - - - men, a - -*

A. *A - - men, a - - men, —*

T. *A - - men, a - - men, —*

B. *A - - men, a - - men, —*

ff

ff

Four years before his *Mass*, MacMillan wrote his second congregational mass setting, *The Galloway Mass*. As with the *Mass*, it establishes

musical and religious connections with other works, though the intention here changes once again. *Seraph's* inclusion of the Agnus Dei from *Mass of Blessed John Henry Newman* was essentially for practical reasons (category 1). The reference to the *Mass* in *Sun-dogs* emphasizes the Eucharistic symbolism of Symmons Roberts' poetry, and is both associative and devoid of any obvious practical necessity (category 5). Speaking about *The Galloway Mass* and *Ninian*, MacMillan reveals not only one but all three aspects of his retrospective modernism: cultural (uniting a community); religious (uniting the religious past and present) and musical (using common musical material):

The reason I wrote *Ninian* (the Clarinet Concerto) was partly to do with a request from the Bishop of Galloway to write something for the '397' celebrations (the 1600th anniversary of St. Ninian). I wrote a congregational mass, *The Galloway Mass*, but it planted something in my mind that was unfinished and needed to be taken one step further. *Ninian* takes musical themes from the Mass, for example the Gloria of the Mass has a recurring plainsong shape which appears really harmonized in the third movement of the Clarinet Concerto. There was a deliberate attempt to connect the two musically, to fill *Ninian* with the music of *The Galloway Mass*, to connect past and present in the way that the Bishop and the people who asked me for the mass connect past and present. So there's a musical connection, but there is also a timeless theological connection as well.⁴²

This is another category 5 recycling (self-quotation), for MacMillan is not reusing the musical material for any practical need. He could easily have not included the reference to *The Galloway* mass in *Ninian*, but its presence in the concerto reveals a deliberate statement by the composer to bring different audiences together:

There's also an attempt I think to reach into communities and make links between them. I wrote *The Galloway Mass* for the people in Ayrshire and in Galloway, and I wrote *Ninian* for the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the clarinettist John Cushing. I have a curious sense of fun about linking those very different communities... This kind of playfulness with communities, making connections between people who would never normally have anything to do with each other, is something that appeals to me.⁴³

⁴² MacMillan in Johnson and Sutton, 1997: 25.

⁴³ Ibid.

In the case of *Ninian*, this 'reaching out' to a variety of communities extends even further, for it is not only *The Galloway Mass* with which it shares musical material. The motet *The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin*, written just one year later in 1997, uses material from the opening of the Clarinet Concerto's second movement, 'The Dream of Pectgils':

Ex. 4.14 MacMillan: *Ninian*, Movement II 'The Dream of Pectgils', bb. 1-4 (percussion 1, solo clarinet and the middle first violin div. a 3 parts)

Ex. 4.15 MacMillan: *Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin*, bb. 1-4 (choir part only)

The main theme of *The Galloway Mass*, which is evident in every movement of the work, is found in two movements of *Ninian*. The first time it appears is in the first movement at bar 130, emerging *pianissimo* in the first trombone, bassoon and cellos, before gradually increasing in volume with louder dynamics and the addition of the first and third

horn and second trombone eight bars later. Although this is clearly audible, it is in the third movement that this theme enjoys its most triumphant statement, heard *fortissimo*:

Ex. 4.16 MacMillan: *Ninian*, Movement III, bb. 161-169 (horn 1, trumpet 2 and viola parts only)

Ex. 4.17 MacMillan: *The Galloway Mass*, 'Agnus Dei', bb. 1-8 (congregation part only)

It is through this common, recognisable melody that MacMillan achieves his goal of uniting different communities, imitating the Bachian practice of incorporating well-known chorales into cantatas. This establishing of relationships between works in his oeuvre is a central part of MacMillan's compositional make-up, and as the discussion above and Appendices E1 and E2 testify, both MacMillan and Bach frequently recycled music in many of their works, especially their mass settings. While the most notable example of this practice in Bach's output is undoubtedly his Mass in B minor, with MacMillan's music it is

in the passiontide cantata, *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, that his most extensive re-use of musical material is evident.

Bach: 'Mass in B minor'; MacMillan: 'Seven Last Words from the Cross'

There are several reasons for extending beyond the genre of the mass to include a cantata for this final section, which comprises a case study of Bach's Mass in B minor and MacMillan's cantata, *Seven Last Words from the Cross*. It should be stressed that Bach's Mass is not addressed in detail here; rather, it provides an appropriate context in which to consider the *Seven Last Words from the Cross*.

Although theological connections between musical sources and various movements of Bach's missae breves remain open to debate, the works incorporated into the Mass in B minor propose a far stronger argument for such an interpretation. The "Crucifixus" section of the Credo movement parodies the lamenting opening chorus of the cantata, *Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*, BWV 12. In addition to its doleful character, the text of this opening chorus specifically refers to the wounds of Christ: "Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen, Angst und Not sind der Christen Tränenbrot, Die das Zeichen Jesu tragen" / "Weeping, lamenting, worrying, despairing, anguish and trouble are the Christian's bread of tears, that bear the marks of Jesus". That the music originally assigned to this text should be used for the "Crucifixus" of the Credo is therefore most apt: common music is used to accompany a common religious subject, in this case, the death of Jesus. Similarly, the music that occurs later in the Credo of the Mass in B minor, for the contrastingly joyful section referring to the resurrection ("Et exspecto"), parodies "Jauchzet, ihr erfreuten Stimmen", the second movement chorus of the cantata, *Gott, Mann lobet Dich in der Stille*, BWV 120. Once again, the connection is both musical and extramusical, for both texts refer to the theme of the resurrection.

While all four of Bach's missae breves were written for a liturgical function, as were all six of MacMillan's masses, the purpose of

the Mass in B minor remains a debatable topic.⁴⁴ The complete Mass in B minor (1749), rather than its initial Kyrie-Gloria genesis of 1733, far exceeds the length of settings written for the Court of Dresden, and therefore it is highly unlikely that it would have been sung complete in a single Catholic service.⁴⁵ Similarly, although MacMillan's *Seven Last Words from the Cross* was written to satisfy a commission from BBC Television to be broadcast one movement each day during Holy Week 1994, it serves no specific liturgical function. However, both Bach's mass and MacMillan's cantata are at least quasi-liturgical, for the latter has been used in the context of religious services, especially during Lent, while most parts of the former could have been used in Lutheran liturgies: although its structure replicates that of the Catholic Mass, rather than the Kyrie-Gloria dominance often associated the Lutheran Church, this curtailed form was by no means limited to Lutheran Church alone.⁴⁶

The second similarity between the two works lies in their musical material, with each composer recycling his own earlier music to a significant degree, and the third and final point fuses these first two aspects of intention and the re-use of musical material together, emphasizing the significance of self-retrospection in each work. The Mass in B minor represents the culmination of Bach's oeuvre, incorporating material from nine earlier works in total. It is the result of a composer looking back at his life's work and assessing it critically. MacMillan parallels Bach's retrospection, examining his own works and reusing material from them.

However, it should be noted that *Seven Last Words from the Cross* was written under tremendous pressure, and its retrospection differs greatly from that of an old man reflecting upon his life's work. It may seem extraordinary to compare one of Bach's final works with a work composed by a thirty-four year old MacMillan, who had only recently been brought to public attention. Yet the practice of self-reflection and

⁴⁴ Butt, 1991: 23.

⁴⁵ Butt, 1991: 6.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

evaluation is highly relevant to *Seven Last Words from the Cross*. In a radio interview from 1996, MacMillan spoke of two types of exhaustion he experienced when writing the cantata. The first of these was a physical exhaustion, travelling to the 1993 Edinburgh Festival each day and driving back home to Glasgow to help look after his very recently born twins – indeed he was so exhausted that he crashed his car as a result of being tired at the wheel.

The second type of exhaustion relates to the significance of retrospection, and provides two illuminating insights into how the reused material in *Seven Last Word from the Cross* in particular should be considered. The reason MacMillan was attending so much of the 1993 Edinburgh Festival was because there was an extensive retrospective of his music at this event, three years after he had become famous through *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*. The following statement, from 1996, explains the composer's thoughts at this time and how these impacted upon *Seven Last Word from the Cross*:

I had a realization that things had to move on. Perhaps a 'first stage' had been exhausted, and this was serious. If I wanted to build on what I had achieved so far, then I had to really focus very strongly on what kind of composer I was and what I wanted to do... And I think I've acquired a greater focus in my work because of that experience. Because of having been put under the limelight, I've had to look at the music of my past and think about what was good about it and what I didn't like about it. I've cut some of the things from my catalogue, because I don't think some of the early pieces should be there. So there was a whole process of self-analysis and self-evaluation, which I found exhausting, and it stopped me writing for a little while. A month after the Edinburgh Festival I had to have the *Seven Last Words* completed, and that deadline came and disappeared. Nothing was written, and I thought I had dried up. Eventually I did get the piece written, but it was very late.⁴⁷

The reused material of *Seven Last Words from the Cross* therefore has both practical implications and a strong degree of self-evaluation. MacMillan was obliged to write a forty-five minute choral-string orchestra piece in a very limited amount of time, and used some of his earlier works for inspiration, resulting in six out of the seven

⁴⁷ MacMillan, 1996, speaking on 'The Usual Suspects', an archive programme broadcast as part of the 'Arts, Classical and Jazz Zone', BBC Radio Scotland, 7.11.08.

movements incorporating previously composed musical material (the exception being the fourth movement). However, this is not to imply that this reuse of musical material in this work is merely practical, Rossini-like recycling, despite the time pressure MacMillan was subjected to during its composition.

These reused works date from 1991 and 1993 (the same year *Seven Last Words from the Cross* was composed). From 1991 are: *Tuireadh*, a clarinet quintet; and the choral motet, *Divo Aloysio Sacrum*. Both of these works are quoted in *Kiss on Wood*, a chamber work written in 1993, which is essentially a sketch for *Seven Last Words from the Cross*. This sketch-piece contains three musical ideas which are reused at various points throughout the cantata: the references to *Tuireadh* and *Divo Aloysio Sacrum*, and a motive which occurs for the first time in *Kiss on Wood*. The first of these is the 'sorrow cadence' from *Tuireadh*, which features prominently in the middle and end of the clarinet quintet, and is evident in the first, sixth and seventh movements of *Seven Last Words from the Cross*. It is this haunting cadence which opens the cantata, repeating over and over. *Tuireadh* is a Celtic word meaning 'lament'⁴⁸, and therefore given the common sorrowful tone of each work, the inclusion of this cadence in *Seven Last Words from the Cross* is a category 4 recycling.

Largo ♩ = 54

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

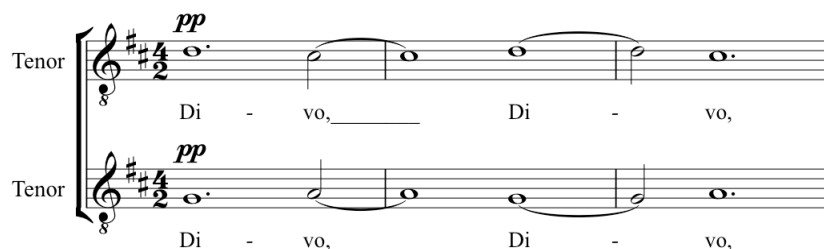
Violoncello

Double Bass

Ex. 4.18 MacMillan: *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do', bb. 1-4

⁴⁸ It was written in response to the Piper Alpha oil rig disaster of 1988, where 167 men were killed in an explosion.

The second movement is developed from the opening of *Kiss on Wood*, which is itself derived from *Divo Aloysio Sacrum*. Andrew Kingsbury (in his 2002 PhD thesis) has mentioned the resemblance between *Divo Aloysio Sacrum* and the central movement of *Cantos Sagrados*, ‘Virgin of Guadalupe’⁴⁹:



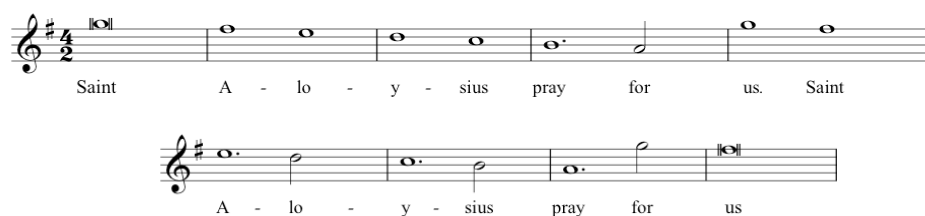
Ex. 4.19 MacMillan: *Divo Aloysio Sacrum*, bb. 36-8 (tenor parts only)



Ex. 4.20 MacMillan: *Cantos Sagrados*, Movement II, bb. 1-3 (alto and tenor parts only)

However, the far more striking similarity between the chorale-like opening of the motet and the almost identical opening of the second movement of *Seven Last Words from the Cross* is left unmentioned. The similarity between *Divo Aloysio Sacrum* and the second movement of *Seven Last Words from the Cross* is explicit, using a descending G major scale. The color is displaced by one note each time it repeats: the first statement of each begins on G, then F#, then E etc, and concludes by returning to its original note (i.e. “Saint” = “us” and “Wo” = “son!”) In order for the color to always start and finish on the same note, there is one less pitch for the number of syllables in each case: seven pitches for the eight syllables of “Saint A-lo-y-sius pray for us” (with the final syllable sharing the same pitch as the first) and five for the six syllables of “Wo-man be-hold thy son!”

⁴⁹ Kingsbury, 2002: 130

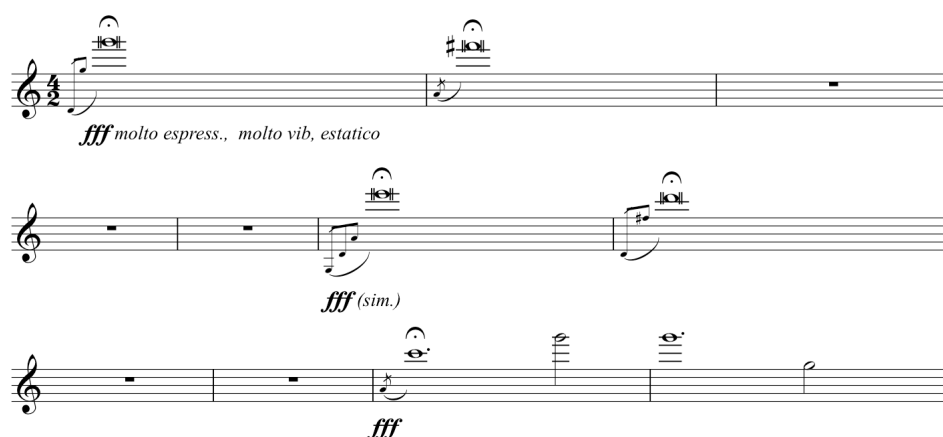


Ex. 4.21 MacMillan: *Divo Aloysio Sacrum*, bb. 1-9 (soprano part only)



Ex. 4.22 MacMillan: *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, Movement II, bb. 1-9 (soprano part only)

Since there is no religious connection between St Aloysius and the Virgin Mary at the foot of the cross, this might be considered a category 3 recycling. However, it is worth noting that the five pitches used for the opening of this second movement of *Seven Words from the Cross* also relate to the opening of *Kiss on Wood*, whose violin part begins the piece with this same descending figure finishing with an ascending leap of a fifth, albeit in a more fragmentary and temporally augmented manner. Once again, the pitches are identical, beginning on a G and falling to a C:



Ex. 4.23 MacMillan: *Kiss on Wood*, bb. 1-11 (violin part only)

These same five notes appear at the beginning of the seventh and final movement of *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, for in this movement

MacMillan adopts the preferred approach of Bach and uses parody rather than simply the quotation of a particular cadence or phrase: the final movement is a parody of *Kiss on Wood*, arranged for choir and string orchestra (category 2, given the common extramusical subject of the crucified Christ):

Very slow
lunga

Soprano
Fa - - - ther!

Alto
Fa - - - ther!

Tenor
Fa - - - ther!

Bass
Fa - - - ther!

Violoncello
Very slow
lunga

Doublebass
Very slow
lunga

Ex. 4.24 MacMillan: *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, Movement VII, bb. 1-9

Before this conclusion is reached however, MacMillan recycles another melody for the third movement, used for the very first time in *Kiss on Wood*. The refrain of the third movement, which uses a prominent high solo violin melody, is developed from bb. 45-7 of *Kiss on Wood*. It is this same melody that concludes the third movement, sung by two solo sopranos:

Ex. 4.25 MacMillan: *Kiss on Wood*, bb. 45-7 (violin part only)

The image shows a musical score for two soprano parts. The top staff is labeled 'SOPRANO 1' and the bottom staff is labeled 'SOPRANO 2'. Both staves have a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: 'Ve - ri - ly, I say un - to you, to - day'. The music consists of a series of eighth notes, with triplets indicated by a '3' over the notes. The dynamics are marked as *mp* (mezzo-piano) at the beginning and *ff* (fortissimo) at the end, with a crescendo line connecting them.

Ex. 4.26 MacMillan: *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, Movement III, bb. 106-9 (soprano parts only)

The musical material from *Kiss on Wood* is therefore evident in movements I, II, III, VI and VII of *Seven Last Words from the Cross*.

There remains one final source, however, not related to *Kiss on Wood*, which is recycled in *Seven Last Words from the Cross*. As mentioned above, the fourth movement is the only movement in the work that does not refer to MacMillan's earlier works, but the fifth movement is based on an earlier piece. As with the three musical ideas from *Kiss on Wood*, the material used for the fifth movement was reincarnated in various pieces. This material comes from *Catherine's Lullabies*, which MacMillan composed in 1990 for Catherine, the first-born of his three children. The repetition of the text "My child, my child", which concludes this *a cappella* work, is always set to the same cadence. This might appropriately be termed 'Catherine's Angel' cadence, not only because angels feature in the text of *Catherine's Lullabies*,⁵⁰ but also because this same cadence is found in MacMillan's minimalist piano miniature, *Angel*, towards the very end of the piece. Moreover, *Angel* was also written for Catherine. This 'Catherine's Angel' cadence was clearly important to MacMillan, for it is also found in the second and third movements of his First Piano Concerto, *The Berserking*, and in the fifth movement, 'I thirst', from *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, in a temporally augmented version: in the 'Catherine's Angel' cadence in *The Berserking* (shown in the first four quavers of Ex. 4.27), the two top B flats of the cadence are transformed into a

⁵⁰ Angels are listed in the Litany of Saints immediately after Mary: "All you holy angels of God, pray for us".

sustained note played by the first violin, while the other notes of the chord are distributed among the choir (first F in the soprano, A flat in the alto, D flat in the tenor; then E flat in the soprano, etc.):



Ex. 4.27 MacMillan: *The Berserking*, Movement III, final bar

Soprano *pp*
Ego te potavi aqua de petra: et tu me potasi felle et acceto I - - -

Alto *pp*
Ego te potavi aqua de petra: et tu me potasi felle et acceto I - - -

Tenor *pp*
Ego te potavi aqua de petra: et tu me potasi felle et acceto I - - -

Bass *pp*
et tu me potasi felle et acceto I - - -

ppp

- - - thirst - - -

- - - thirst - - -

- - - thirst - - -

- - - thirst - - -

- - - thirst - - -

Ex. 4.28 MacMillan: *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, Movement V 'I thirst', bb. 35-42 (choir and first violin parts only)

The above examples represent only a small proportion of the extent to which MacMillan recycles music, in this case, within the context of sacred music. The composer himself acknowledges the influence his faith has upon his music, both in sacred works and in general:

There wouldn't even be Catholicism if there had been an attempt to try and dam up the past... Catholicism needs to have its past as well as its potential future; and therefore I suppose that conditions the way I look at the past.⁵¹

This statement succinctly summarises the essence of MacMillan's religious retrospective modernism, which is rooted in the Catholic tradition.

The practice of reusing musical material is by no means confined to MacMillan's liturgical/quasi-liturgical music, however. Indeed, it is found in a considerable number of his works, both sacred and secular, revealing a retrospection not only to earlier composers such as Wagner and Bach, but to his own self. Just as MacMillan continues traditions from the past, he establishes his own musical traditions, planting musical seeds which spread their roots throughout later works. This was made evident in Chapter Two, where we saw how *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* draws on material from *The Berserking* and *...as others see us...*, and it is clearly apparent in *Seven Last Words from the Cross* also. The next chapter explores in detail this highly significant aspect of MacMillan's purely musical retrospective modernism, where his compositions continuously infiltrate each other.

⁵¹ MacMillan, 1999: <http://www.compositiontoday.com/articles/james_macmillan_interview.asp>

Part III: Musical Retrospective Modernism: Self-/Quotation and Polystylism

Chapter 5. Self-retrospective Modernism: MacMillan, Self-quotation, and the Mahler Connection

Having addressed issues relating to cultural retrospective modernism in Part I (Liberation Theology and the ‘Scotland’s Shame’ debate) and religious retrospective modernism in Part II (the significance of sacred myth and ritual in Wagner, and liturgical rites with reference to Bach), it is now appropriate to turn our attention specifically to musical retrospective modernism. The most distinctive feature of the latter in MacMillan’s work dominated the final section of the previous chapter: the re-use of musical material. Discussing the topic of composers’ self-borrowings, Dean wrote the following introduction:

Many, perhaps most, composers of the past have borrowed from their own earlier work. Their motives have varied: to save time or trouble, to preserve what seems too good to waste, to gratify the public or the performer with the same tidbit over again, to develop material that offers a further creative stimulus-all have played their part. So have less conscious processes, such as the apparently accidental discovery of the perfect context for an idea born in quite other circumstances. With some composers the habit has been casual, with others almost systematic.¹

While the previous chapter considered different types of recycling in MacMillan’s works, this chapter focuses solely on the aforementioned ‘category 5’ recycling, namely self-quotation. The key point of distinction between self-quotation and the other types of recycling concerns the reason(s) for which the musical material is reused. Whereas Bach reused musical material for practical purposes, even when establishing a theological connection between works, this was not the case for many late nineteenth and twentieth century composers who reused some of their own music. Mahler, for example, reused many themes from his own musical works, but this was emphatically not for practical considerations.

¹ Dean, 1960: 238.

The music of MacMillan and Mahler is stylistically very different, as exemplified in their generic preferences: while Mahler confined himself almost exclusively to the symphony and the orchestral song/cycle, MacMillan has written in many different genres, from sonatas and symphonies, to song-cycles and operas, to cantatas and *a cappella* works. Nevertheless, Mahler plays an integral part of this discussion concerning MacMillan specifically, and on a macro level with regard to subsequent composers who have engaged with musical quotation and polystylism. Since such composers are legion, the present discussion will restrict itself to some of the key figures in the evolution of polystylism since Mahler, whose music has had a direct and definite impact upon MacMillan's work. These composers include Ives, Berio, Schnittke and Peter Maxwell Davies.

Before exploring the topic of polystylism in Chapter Six, there are several reasons for comparing MacMillan with Mahler in particular first. The most significant of these concerns the practice of self-quotation and the extent to which this has been an important aspect of each composer's work. Henri-Louis de La Grange wrote of Mahler: "Many composers have, of course, quoted themselves, but not as often as he."² MacMillan is one of the very few composers to self-quote in his works even more frequently than Mahler. Perhaps the most famous composer between Mahler and MacMillan to engage in this practice was Berio (See Appendix I). However, despite the extensive use of pre-existing musical material, including numerous re-workings of his own works, Berio himself claimed he seldom quoted or self-quoted: "Apart from the *Chemins*, where I quote, translate, expand and transcribe my *Sequenzas*, I don't recall having quoted anything else, if you can define my use of the Mahler [in *Sinfonia*] as quotation in any case."³ Elsewhere the composer argued that "the most profitable commentary on a symphony or an opera has always been another symphony or another

² La Grange, 1997: 142-3.

³ Berio, 1985: 110.

opera.”⁴ In other words, by establishing a musical connection between two works, however subtle, the later work can help define its predecessor.

However, it is more appropriate to consider MacMillan’s self-quotations in relation to those of Mahler rather than Berio for two reasons. The first of these refers to the nature of the quotations. As Appendix I demonstrates, Berio frequently ‘re-worked’ or ‘re-composed’ works into new contexts, but often the musical link was greatly obscured. In the music of Mahler and MacMillan, certain themes or motives are given emphasis and gain importance by being quoted in new contexts. With Berio, the reuse of musical material was to exploit the further potential of the material in new contexts; with Mahler and MacMillan, it is often the case that a noticeable theme is included because of its extramusical significance.

The second reason why it is appropriate to compare MacMillan to Mahler specifically concerns the importance of a single, recurring motive throughout each composer’s oeuvre. For MacMillan, this is an example of self-quotation, manifested in the various works that refer to his folk-like ballad, *The Tryst*; for Mahler, the motive in question is taken from Wagner’s *Siegfried*, the so-called ‘Ewigkeit’ motive. These recurring themes, in addition to one further example by MacMillan, *The Children*, are discussed in detail at the end of this chapter. Finally, it should be noted that both composers began self-quoting their music from the very start of their careers, and continued throughout.

Appendix G demonstrates Mahler’s musical self-quotations, spanning more than three decades. Although the first three symphonies share no common musical material in the form of self-quotation, the Second Symphony continues the narrative of the first, while the Second and Third are linked by quoting from another source of musical material, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*: ‘Urlicht’ and ‘Ablösung im Sommer’ in the Third Symphony, and ‘Der Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt’ in the scherzo of the Second. About the recycling of material from these

⁴ Berio, 1985: 107.

songs in the Second and Third Symphonies, Cooke explains the manner in which they are integrated into their new contexts, where the songs develop naturally into symphonic movements, and where the voice is just one more instrument (a highly expressive one) in the motivic texture.⁵ La Grange expresses a very similar sentiment with regard to Mahler's inclusion of songs into his symphonies, stating that no one before Mahler had transformed pre-existent lieder into symphonic movements, and that these lieder are introduced into the symphonies in such a way as to form an "organic" whole in the symphonic context.⁶

The human voice is also heard in the final movement of the Fourth Symphony, which quotes from its symphonic predecessor (as well as 'Das himmlische Leben' from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*), and which in turn provides musical material that is heard again in the Fifth Symphony. Another of the songs from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* is referenced in the Tenth Symphony, while the conclusion of Mahler's Ninth Symphony, his last completed symphony, includes a self-quotation from the penultimate movement of the *Kindertotenlieder*, specifically the music set to the text "Der Tag ist schön auf jenen Höh'n!" ("The day is fine upon the hills!"), while his final, unfinished Tenth Symphony uses the 'treadmill' ostinato from *Das irdische Leben*.⁷

Johnson stresses the fact that it is impossible to consider the wealth of reminiscences, echoes, and allusions to preexisting music in Mahler's works without addressing the fact that the most deliberate and arguably the most important of these are instances of self-borrowing.⁸ However, he also argues that Mahler's symphonic treatment of his own earlier song material does not constitute an act of quotation, since the "materials are not framed in such a way as to distance them from some normative orchestral narrative voice, which would be required by an act of quotation" and "reminiscences are largely absorbed into the fabric of the surrounding music without

⁵ Cooke, 1980: 43.

⁶ La Grange, 1997: 142-3.

⁷ Cooke, 1980: 121.

⁸ Johnson, 2009: 161.

drawing attention to themselves”.⁹ This assumes that all musical quotations, or in this case self-quotations, can only be defined as such if they are explicitly presented through means of juxtaposition. Such an assumption is not unreasonable, but it does exclude many of Mahler’s self-quotations which, as La Grange has stated, are usually incorporated into the organic whole of the symphony, rather than presented explicitly as foreign objects. The fact that Mahler’s self-quotation is not always obvious does not necessarily mean it is not self-conscious, and the same is true of MacMillan.

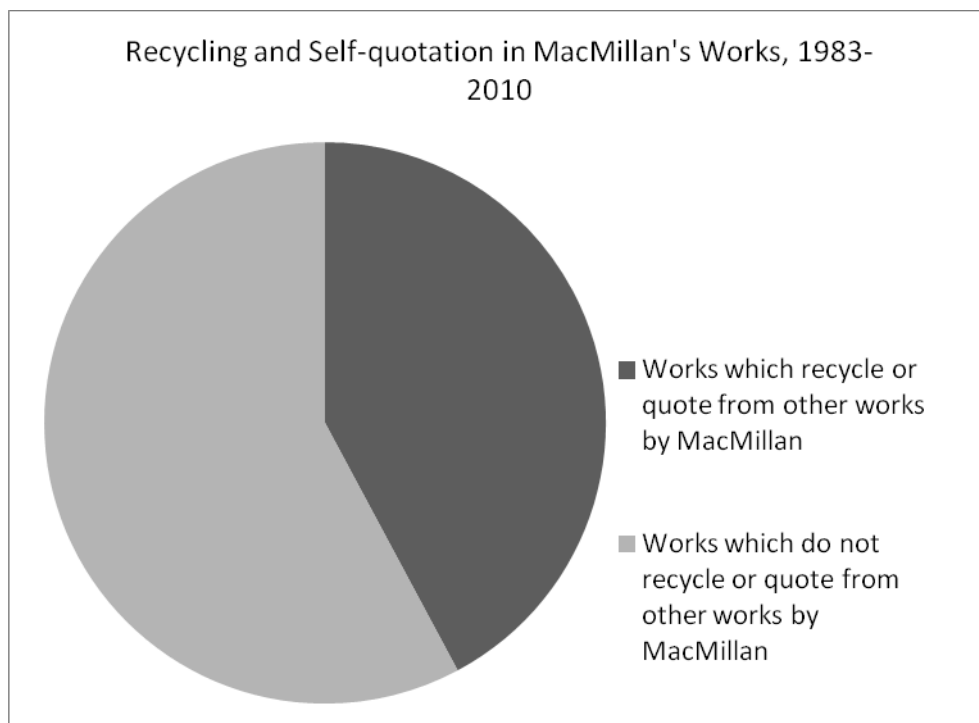
The above discussion of Mahler’s self-quotations is deliberately brief, for it must be stressed that Mahler’s practice of this method serves not as an influence upon MacMillan’s approach to his own music (the composer has never mentioned Mahler as a source of inspiration), but merely as a model with which to compare MacMillan’s own practice of self-quotation. The most effective way to show the extent of this is through an examination of Appendix G (Mahler’s instances of recycling/self-quotation) in conjunction with Appendix F1 (MacMillan’s instances of recycling/self-quotation).

All found instances of MacMillan re-using musical material between 1982 and 2010 are presented in the timeline-network of Appendix F1 and are also listed textually in Appendix F2. Many of the works in Appendix F1’s complex diagram show examples of sources and derivations from the same year, or just one year apart, such as the *Lumen Christi* 'sketch'¹⁰ and Symphony: 'Vigil'. At other times however, MacMillan makes very clear and deliberate references to works composed several years earlier, and it is in these examples that MacMillan uses the repetition of material across works as a rhetorical device. The diagram includes all the instances of recycling in the mass settings discussed in the previous chapter (with reference to Bach’s use of musical recycling), in addition to many others.

⁹ Johnson, 2009: 161-2.

¹⁰ The composer himself refers to it as a 'sketch' in his programme note to the piece: MacMillan, 1997: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Lumen-Christi/7641>>

Appendix A lists MacMillan's works up to and including 2010, and also indicates the works not examined in this study. The result is that out of the 178 works MacMillan had composed by this time, 75 are related to another by sharing common musical material: $75/178 = 42.13\%$. However, since this study has considered only 140 of these 178 works, there are still 38 pieces which may include some reference to another of MacMillan's works. It is therefore more accurate to say that *at least* 42.13% of the works the composer wrote between 1983 and 2010 bear a musical connection to another of his works. While many composers have quoted themselves, this extraordinary statistic makes MacMillan stand out conspicuously and offers the clearest representation of his self-retrospective modernism.



Ex. 5.1 Recycling and Self-quotation in MacMillan's Works, 1983-2010

Appendix F1 indicates that some of these works have been reused in not just one but several later works. Before discussing MacMillan's recurring self-quotations however, it is important to briefly define some possible characteristics, which might be confused with self-quotations.

The first exemptions from Appendix F1 comprise stylistic gestures that have become particularly associated with MacMillan's style. This is by no means to suggest such gestures were necessarily invented by MacMillan, and as the following testifies, in some cases this is certainly not the case. They have, nevertheless, been absorbed into his musical language and are now identifiably 'MacMillanesque'. I call such gestures 'MacMillanisms'. The second set of exemptions from the category of self-quotation refers to the revision of works or re-versions of works, by which I mean alternative versions of the same work, e.g. *Cantos Sagrados*, which exists in versions both for choir and organ and choir and string orchestra. Nevertheless, it is worth considering these works (since they include an element of retrospection), as well as several 'MacMillanisms', before addressing the works which actually do offer genuine examples of self-quotation.

Exemptions: MacMillanisms, Revisions and Re-versions

Exemptions I: 'MacMillanisms'

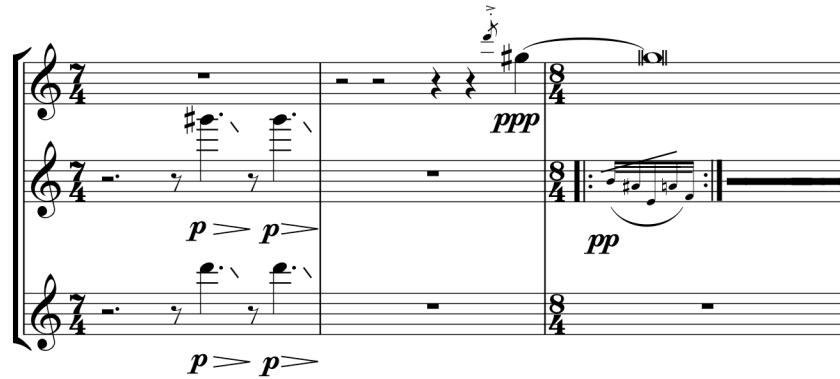
Without doubt, the most distinctive of all MacMillan's musical gestures is the *pibroch* ornamentation – the small clusters of grace-notes included in almost every single piece he has written. This establishes an instant connection with Scottish folk music, given its strong association with the archetypal Scottish instrument: the bagpipes. Equally typical of the composer is the use of semitonal and tonal glissandi in his string writing, either to express a scream (rising) or a sigh (falling).



Ex. 5.2 MacMillan: *Memento*, bb. 57-59 (Violin I part only)

However, although these features have become 'MacMillanisms', it should be noted that the influence of Maxwell Davies is present here,

even if only on a subliminal level. A more detailed look at Maxwell Davies' influence upon MacMillan is given later in this chapter, but for the present, it is appropriate to examine at least one, brief example from his First Symphony where, within the space of just three bars, these two 'MacMillanesque' traits are evident:



Ex. 5.3 Maxwell Davies: *Symphony No. 1*, Movement IV, bb. 126-128 (piccolo and two flute parts only)

That these two MacMillanisms are found in Maxwell Davies' First Symphony is unsurprising, for this was a work of great importance to MacMillan as a child: "Hearing the first symphony, again at quite a young age, I was intrigued and inspired by the fact that he wanted to do things in a whole range of different ways".¹¹ (This is by no means the only work by Maxwell Davies to make a clear and direct effect upon MacMillan, and these other influential pieces are discussed below in Chapter Six).

One of MacMillan's own characteristic gestures is a playful, birdsong-like figure¹², comprising wide leaps and set to the 'scotch-snap' rhythm in triplets:

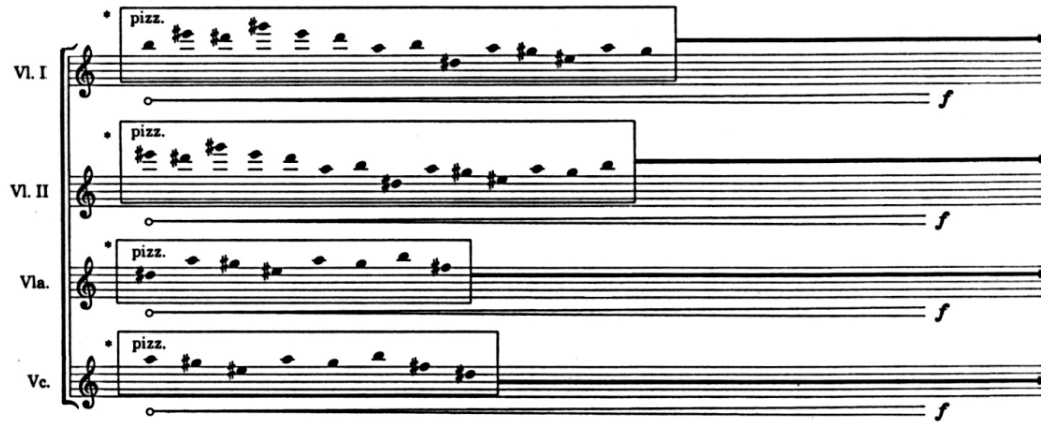
¹¹ MacMillan in McGregor, 2010: 92.

¹² Although the composer has never revealed any specific extramusical association with this figure, it might reasonably be interpreted as MacMillan's most frequent and prominent homage to fellow Catholic composer Messiaen, whose music is noted for its use of birdsong.

Ex. 5.4 MacMillan: *Magnificat*, bb. 38-40

The above example is taken from his *Magnificat*, but this lively, mischievous figure – almost always in high woodwind instruments, especially flutes and piccolos, as it is in the orchestrated version of the *Magnificat* - could just as easily have come from bars 25-6 of the *Nunc Dimittis*, bars 50-54 of the first movement of *Quickening*, or bars 97-119 of the first movement of Symphony 'Vigil', to name but a few examples.

Another borrowed technique MacMillan frequently employs in choral works is the elicitation of words, sung/spoken quickly and with various voice parts entering at different times, rendering textual comprehension almost impossible. This is taken from Britten's *War Requiem*, and MacMillan has employed this innovation in several works, such as *Quickening*, *Catherine's Lullabies*, *Visitatio Sepulchri*, *Sun-dogs* and *Seven Last Words from the Cross*. Related to these sporadic entries is the evocation of rain through the use of 'pizzicato raindrops'. Again, this occurs in a number of works, including *Quickening*, Symphony No. 2, Horn Quintet, *Visitatio Sepulchri* and others. Sometimes, though not always, this is accompanied by the performance instruction 'like raindrops'.



* *ad lib.* Weave your own path through the notes with irregular spacing: some very fast, some not so fast. The general effect should be like rain dropping.

Ex. 5.5 MacMillan: *Symphony No. 2*, Movement I, b. 6 (string parts only)

Finally, accompanying string crossings – back and forth across three or four strings – are evident in numerous works by MacMillan, as early as 1982 with *Etwas zurückhaltend* (e.g. bb. 168-175), and as recently as 2010 with *Clemency*:



Ex. 5.6 MacMillan: *Clemency*, bb. 169-70 (violin and viola parts only)

All the above characteristics and techniques discussed above have become staples of MacMillan's musical language and are to be found in many of his works. In no way should they be identified with self-quotation.

Exemptions II: Revisions and Re-versions

According to his publisher, Boosey and Hawkes, by 2010 six of MacMillan's works were the products of revisions: *Untold* (1987, rev.

1991); *Visions of a November Spring* (1988, rev. 1991); *Epiclesis* (1993, rev. 1998); Piano Concerto No. 2 (1999, rev. 2003); *Missa Brevis* (1977, rev. 2007); and *Etwas zurückhaltend* (1982, rev. 2008). The first two of these works are explained though their common year of revision: 1991. Having been launched into the public's attention overnight with *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* in 1990, it is understandable that MacMillan would enter a brief period of self-criticism, double-checking earlier works before they became commercially available and making revisions where he considered necessary. To have revised *Epiclesis* (a trumpet concerto) five years after its original incarnation is also unsurprising. MacMillan is a trumpeter himself, and therefore his technical knowledge of this instrumental inevitably led to a particularly critical assessment of the piece.

The two most interesting and revealing cases of revision occur as the composer approached middle age. *Missa Brevis* was revised thirty years after its original composition, while the single-movement piece for string quartet, *Etwas zurückhaltend*, was revised twenty-six years after its initial conception. As mentioned above in the chapter on Wagner, the latter work is a product of MacMillan the PhD student, and reveals his early interest in Wagner that has continued throughout his compositional development. In an interview about *Missa Brevis*, MacMillan explains why he revised this particular piece, as well as his continuous self-scrutiny, reconsidering the works in his compositional catalogue. Having been asked by Rebecca Tavener whether or not the *Missa Brevis* required any revision for publication, the composer replied that he only made miniscule tweaks, and added that throughout his life he has taken things out of his catalogue if he thought they were mundane or immature.¹³ However, these instances of 'resuscitating' early works are rare.

MacMillan's desire to create several versions of the same work is expressed through a far greater number of examples. It should be stressed that these are often not later revisions after some reflection,

¹³ MacMillan, quoted in Tavener, 2007: 5.

but simultaneous (or near-simultaneous) versions of the same work. In addition, there are works that exist in one version, but the composer has expressed more than one type of performance (e.g. a work for either SATB soli or SATB chorus). In other words, the music itself has not had to be altered or arranged in any way. The quotation/recycling of certain parts of works in these lists should not be confused with their multiple *versions*. For example, the last movement of *Cantos Sagrados*, 'Sun Stone', uses the same musical material as 'Man to man... shall brithers be...' from *Into the Ferment*, so this is an example of recycling (in this case, parodying). However, *Cantos Sagrados* is also an example of MacMillan's multiple-version works, since the work exists in a version for choir and organ, and a version for choir and orchestra.

While all of the examples above are exempt from being classified as 'self-quotations', there are numerous instances of this practice in MacMillan's output. The two most significant of these come from his *Three Scots Songs: The Children* and *The Tryst*, and the following examines the enduring legacies of these two, important songs.

Thematic/Motivic Recurrences: *Three Scots Songs* and the 'Ewigkeit' motive

While Appendices F1 and F2 include all the found quotations in the majority of MacMillan's works composed between 1982 and 2010, two 'sources', stand out conspicuously from the others due to their multiple related works with which they share common musical material: *The Tryst* and *The Children*. It is worth addressing both of these early songs by MacMillan in the same chapter, not only because of their common year of composition (1984), but also because they both set a text by William Soutar; they are both distinctively Scottish in character; they were published - together with *The Ballad* - in 1996 as *Three Scots*

Songs; and perhaps most significantly of all, they are the two earliest¹⁴ and most frequently self-quoted works in MacMillan's oeuvre. Including the forms in which they were originally written (the 'sources'), by 2010 *The Children* had been used in six works, while *The Tryst* was evident in an extraordinary thirteen works. These two songs – the most potent examples of MacMillan's self-retrospective modernism – enjoy an elevated status in MacMillan's ever-expanding body of work.

Scots Song I: The Ballad

Given the common author of their texts (Soutar), and the collective published form of *Three Scots Songs*, it is tempting to consider *The Ballad* together with *The Tryst* and *The Children*, especially as it also reuses musical material. However, whereas the latter two songs were the original 'sources' of the material which was later reused, *The Ballad* takes its musical material from *The Berserking*. Soutar's poetry was the initial impetus for *The Children* and *The Tryst*, but not for *The Ballad*. In addition, the main melody of *The Ballad* occurs in just two other works: *The Berserking* and *Lament for Mary, Queen of Scots*. Nevertheless, it is worth briefly considering here, since it bears a further connection with the other two songs in that its musical incarnations stretch over a considerable time span of eighteen years: from *The Berserking* (1990) to *The Ballad* (1994) to *Lament for Mary, Queen of Scots* (2008). In *The Berserking*, the right hand of the solo piano part at bar 387 in the concerto's central movement plays a theme that slowly develops. Excluding the two As (the first and third notes of the example below), the melody gradually becomes one note longer each time it begins: B-E-F#-G:

¹⁴ I deliberately exclude *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* here. Although it dates from 1982, the material from this unpublished work that was reused in *Three Dawn Rituals* and *Búsqueda* is very much an example of recycling rather than self-quotation.



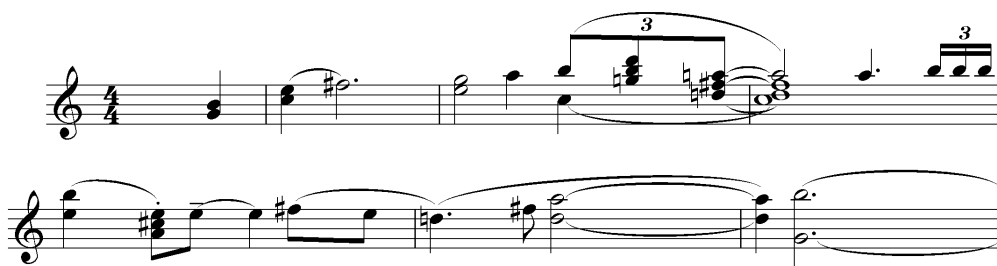
Ex. 5.7 MacMillan: *The Berserking*, Movement II, bb. 387-394 (piano part, RH only)

Eventually, MacMillan presents the theme in its entirety, preserving the 'rogue' A in each statement, to give the melodic phrase: B-E-F#-G-A-B-D-A:



Ex. 5.8 MacMillan: *The Berserking*, bb. 405-412 (piano part only)

As with this first phrase, the second phrase of the melody is repeated over and over, beginning with just the first note, with one new note being added each time. The first complete statement of this second phrase begins with the final note of bar 429, with semiquaver triplets: B-E-F#-E-D-F#-A-B. Thus, the upbeat to bar 427 presents the melody in its entirety, with both the first and second phrases:



Ex. 5.9 MacMillan: *The Berserking*, upbeat to b. 427-432 (RH of piano part only)

This forms the first phrase of the vocal part of *the Ballad*, and recurs in bb. 122-5 of *Mary, Queen of Scots* (without the initial B anacrusis and with an additional C# at the end of b. 123):



Ex. 5.10 MacMillan: *The Ballad*, bb. 1-2



Ex. 5.11 MacMillan: *Lament for Mary, Queen of Scots*, bb. 122-5 (soprano part only)

The strong Scottish extramusical theme in these works is surely one of the reasons this melody recurs in each of them. This is not so much the case for *The Children* and *The Tryst*, which also have strong Scottish origins with Soutar's poetry, but which extend beyond common national associations in the later works that quote their melodies.

Scots Song II: The Children

MacMillan originally composed *The Children* as the central movement of the song-cycle, *Songs of a Just War*, an unpublished work submitted as part of his Composition PhD at Durham University. In this original form the melody in the voice part centres around the interval of a minor third. When MacMillan arranged it for voice and piano in 1995 however, every bar contained a reference to a minor third or a major sixth, in either the voice or piano parts. Every vocal phrase begins with a minor third, and when the voice part is silent, the piano includes minor thirds and/or major sixths. Some of these are more obvious than others: the piano enters with the voice at the beginning of the piece, sustaining a pair of minor thirds, an octave apart (A# and C#):

pp *semplice* (cold, numb, childlike, naive)

Up - on the street they lie.

pp

l.v.

Ped. (sempre)

Ex. 5.12 MacMillan: *The Children*, bb. 1-2

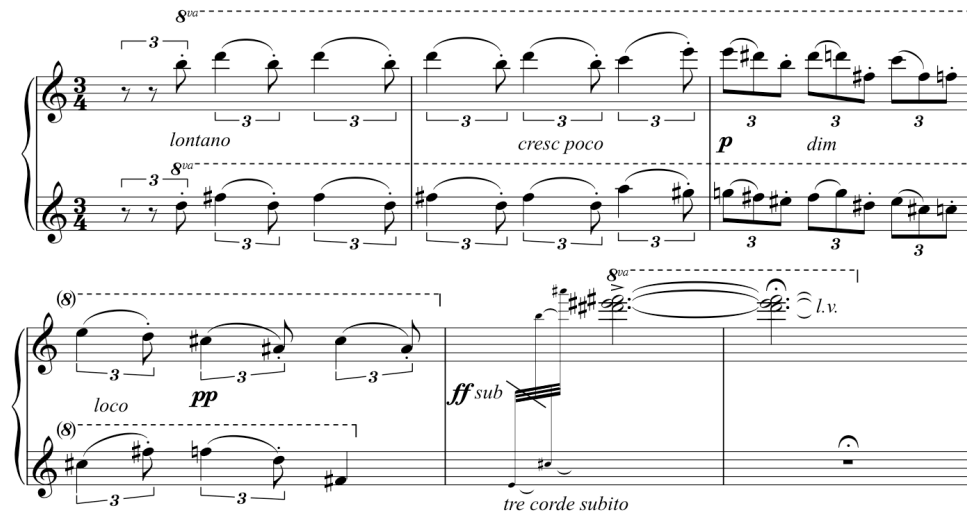
The piano is then silent until bar sixteen, where it plays a major third in the right hand (B and D#), but also a 'bell-tolling' E in the left hand, creating a major sixth below the C# that is still being sustained in the voice part. When this vocal C# then ceases in bar 17, the piano dutifully satisfies the minor third/major sixth addiction by supplying both intervals: a minor third of A# and C#, and the still-present bell-tolling E in the left hand, re-creating the major sixth between the voice and piano parts from the bar before:

pp

una corda

Ex. 5.13 MacMillan: *The Children*, bb. 16-19 (piano part only)

This intervallic obsession can also be found in the grace notes. There are just two instances of grace notes in the song (bb. 31 and 41), and each contains the same four notes, the last two of which (C# leaping up to an A#) provide a major sixth, before crashing down heavily onto a minor third (D# and F#), coloured by an additional E#:



Ex. 5.14 MacMillan: *The Children*, bb. 37-42 (piano part only)

It is through this stark contrast of mood and dynamic that MacMillan emphasises the juxtaposition of the poem's two themes, war and children, alternating between the hypnotic (the recurring opening idea in the voice) and the horrific (the sudden, aggressive outbursts in the piano). Perhaps the composer intended this duality between voice and piano to reflect the duality of the poem's subjects, with the singer (whose part never rises above the dynamic *mp*) representing the innocence of children, and the piano the horrors of war. Such a suggestion is supported by the instruction MacMillan includes to the singer at the beginning of the piece: "*semplice (cold, numb, childlike – naïve)*".

In the end however, the horror is victorious, bringing the song to a deeply unsettling conclusion. It is in these final aggressive chords that an allusion to Soutar's nationality is made, using the 'Scotch-snap' rhythm of semiquaver-dotted quaver. This first occurs in an isolated instance in bar 55, and is then repeated relentlessly from bar 79 to the end. For both of these occurrences, MacMillan includes the marking 'violent, explosive':



Ex. 5.15 MacMillan: *The Children*, bb. 79-82

In the same year that MacMillan arranged *The Children* for voice and piano, 1995, he completed his first opera, *Inés de Castro*, which he had begun in 1991. He had extracted *The Children* from *Songs of a Just War* for use in two scenes in the opera (a synopsis of which is included in Appendix J2). Although the libretto of *Inés de Castro* is taken from the play by John Clifford, the dramatic contexts of the opera and Souatr's *The Children* are very similar, with both tackling the subject of war and the subsequent death of children. More specifically however, although Soutar's poem may be interpreted to reflect war in general, it was written in response to the horrors of the Spanish Civil War, and thus the musical connection MacMillan establishes with *Inés de Castro* - which is set in the context of war between Spain and Portugal in the twelfth century - is apt. The first instance of *The Children*'s musical material is found in an aria sung by Pacheco in the first scene of Act II. Seeing the blood-stained sack he is carrying, Inés asks Pacheco what is inside, and he tells her it contains the heads of her two children. When she asks whether or not he has any feeling, he replies with the following text, set to the music of *The Children*:

I once knew a boy. His home was taken in a border raid...
 The Spaniards came at night and they stabbed him and they
 whipped him and they left him for dead. But he lived. He
 saw. They found his mother. They raped her, again, again.
 (*false*) When they tired they used their knives. They
 found his baby sister, and they tossed her in the air. They
 tried to catch her with their blades. And this boy I know. He
 saw it all. He screams inside my mind. There is nothing
 worse than being powerless as you know.¹⁵

¹⁵ MacMillan after Clifford, 1996: 27.

The boy Pacheco is referring to is of course himself, and these scenes he witnessed so young have corrupted him. The music portrays this in the sneering strings over the childish melody of repeated minor thirds:

Ex. 5.16 MacMillan: *Inés de Castro*, Act II, scene 1, bb. 310-13

The second statement of *The Children* occurs at the very end of the opera. A little girl sits by the gravestone of Inés, and as the latter pleads for help from the child, the girl innocently sings the melody of *The Children*, and explains to Inés that she cannot do anything, as she is just a little girl.

In the context of *Inés de Castro*, the meaning of *The Children* remains the same, reflecting the innocence of children against the brutality of war. However, MacMillan then quotes *The Children* in his Cello Concerto, the 'Good Friday' work of *Triduum: An Easter Triptych*, written less than a year after the opera. By using the material in this context, it takes on an added level of religious significance. Set in parallel to this child-like melody is the plainchant for the Reproaches, which are sung during the Veneration of the Cross in the Good Friday

liturgy ("My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me.")¹⁶

The quotation of *The Children* in the Cello Concerto takes on a particularly naïve quality, played on a glockenspiel. At this point, the texture is suddenly reduced from full orchestra to just tuba, glockenspiel, harp and solo cello, allowing the glockenspiel to resonate prominently with the musical reference:



Ex. 5.17 MacMillan: *Cello Concerto*, Movement II, bb. 19-22

This musical idea, and more specifically its distinctive instrumentation, bears a point of reference to the third piece of MacMillan's Easter Triptych, the Symphony 'Vigil'. Like the Cello Concerto, Symphony 'Vigil' makes use of tuned percussion in its slow, central movement, albeit a celesta rather than a glockenspiel here. Indeed the manner in which these instruments are used in each case is so similar that the listener cannot but help make the connection between the two works, especially given their sonic similarity. Just as it is for the glockenspiel in the Cello Concerto, the dense orchestration is reduced greatly when the celesta sounds in Symphony 'Vigil', and although the musical material is different, using the plainchant of 'Lumen Christi' ("the light of Christ") rather than the melody of *The Children*, even here there is an uncanny similarity, since the two themes are both dominated by the interval of a minor third:

¹⁶ MacMillan, 1996: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Cello-Concerto/2478>>



Ex. 5.18 MacMillan: 'Lumen Christi' melody in *Symphony 'Vigil'*, Movement II, bb. 187-93

A further resemblance can be found in MacMillan's habit of extracting/including small-scale pieces from/in larger works. *The Children* finds itself in the genres of song, opera and concerto. Similarly, MacMillan's treatment of the 'Lumen Christi' chant was originally a small musical 'sketch' for *Symphony 'Vigil'*, and is heard on the celeste at the end of this work's second movement. The composer himself has commented on the way in which the ever-evolving harmonic background to this simple, two-note melody leads to an unsettling polytonal opposition in the middle of the piece, with the overall effect of a child's music box that is mostly serene but with some ominous shadings.¹⁷ The inclusion of the glockenspiel and celesta in the Cello Concerto and *Symphony 'Vigil'* respectively strengthens the relationship between these second and third works of *Triduum*.

In addition to the passion-inspired Cello Concerto, the theme of *The Children* is also evident in the third movement of MacMillan's Clarinet Concerto, *Ninian*. Entitled 'A Mystical Vision of the Christ-child', this movement unambiguously refers back to *The Children*, emphasizing the infant aspect of Christ, and the score even includes the indication '*semplice (childlike)*' (see Ex. 5.19). The presence of *The Children* in so many works offers a clear example of MacMillan's self-retrospective modernism, where an early work re-appears later in several different guises. MacMillan's Cello Sonata No. 1 is the last work to make use of *The Children*, and it is also the only work to include reference to both *The Children* and *The Tryst*. While the above discussion reveals the

¹⁷ MacMillan, 1997: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Lumen-Christi/7641>>

extensive use of *The Children* in a variety of contexts, this is dwarfed by the significance of *The Tryst*.

The image shows a musical score for MacMillan's *Ninian*, Movement III, measures 78-80. The score is for piccolo, flute 1, flute 2, percussion 1, and percussion 2. It features a 'semplce (childlike)' motif in the woodwinds and a 'semplce (childlike)' motif in the percussion.

Ex. 5.19 MacMillan: *Ninian*, Movement III, bb. 78-80 (piccolo, flute 1, flute 2, percussion 1 and percussion 2 parts only)

Scots Song III: The Tryst, and the 'Ewigkeit' motive

Although it was common for composers throughout history to recycle works for practical means, it is relatively rare to find a recurring theme in numerous works by the same composer. However, MacMillan is by no means the first nor the only composer to reuse a specific theme or motive in multiple works. La Grange explains that throughout the whole of Mahler's music there recurs a characteristic thematic "kernel", known as the *Ewigkeitmotiv* ("eternity motive"), because it is borrowed from the third act of Wagner's *Siegfried* (e.g. the love duet, Brünnhilde's monologue), where it is associated with the text "Ewig, ewig".¹⁸

¹⁸ La Grange, 1997: 143.



Ex. 5.20 Wagner: *Siegfried*, Act III, Scene 3 (conclusion), “Ewig war ich, ewig bin ich”

This motive is also clearly evident in the opening bars of Wagner’s *Siegfried Idyll*, in the tonic major of E:



Ex. 5.21 Wagner: *Siegfried Idyll*, bb. 4-7 (violin 1 part only)

It is ironic that this very motive was, itself, reused by Wagner. His unfinished String Quartet of 1864 was the first to incorporate this theme (see Appendix H1).¹⁹ Robert Donington points out the dislocated nature of the two main themes of *Siegfried Idyll* and the final scene of Act III of *Siegfried*, stating that even if we knew nothing of these themes’ complex history, we should notice their incongruity in the context of the *Ring*, not only because they are longer but also less adaptable than any of the other motives in the score.²⁰ Yet Mahler proved how flexible at least one of these themes (the ‘Ewigkeit’ motive) could be, as expressed in seven works, and MacMillan has shown the same with his equivalent theme, *The Tryst*.

Appendix H1 shows the various incarnations of the ‘Ewigkeit’ motive in works by Wagner and Mahler. This begins with Wagner’s String Quartet of 1864 – the ‘source’ of the motive – followed by Wagner’s recycling of it in *Siegfried* and *Siegfried Idyll*. The remaining eight boxes refer to the works by Mahler that incorporate the motive, between 1888 and 1908. Wagner alternates between the version of the

¹⁹ Abraham, 1945: 233.

²⁰ Donington, 1974: 214-5.

theme shown above and a version where the scale rises a major second higher before resolving, as seen in bar 32:



Ex. 5.22 Wagner: *Siegfried Idyll*, bb. 29-32 (violin 1 part only)

Similarly, Mahler's use of this motive often ends with a disjunct interval, rising a third or fourth (typically to an appoggiatura).²¹ Arguably his boldest statement of this motive occurs in the climactic, choral conclusion of the Second Symphony, while it is presented in a much more tender context in the closing bars of *Das Lied von der Erde*:

Ex. 5.23 Mahler: *Symphony No. 2 'Resurrection'*, Movement V, bb. 696-702 (choir parts only)

Ex. 5.24 Mahler: *Das Lied von der Erde*, Movement VI 'Abschied', Fig. 58 (violin parts only)

Like Mahler's adoption of Wagner's 'Ewigkeit' motive, MacMillan's *The Tryst* is remarkable not only for its number of occurrences – in thirteen works – but also for the vast time period it spans: over a quarter of a

²¹ Ibid.

century, and almost the entirety of MacMillan's compositional career to date. Appendix H2 isolates *The Tryst* and its derivations from the more complicated texture of Appendix F1. The latter provides a graphic representation of MacMillan's self-retrospective modernism in its entirety, but *The Tryst* alone represents the significance and longevity of this approach in his output.

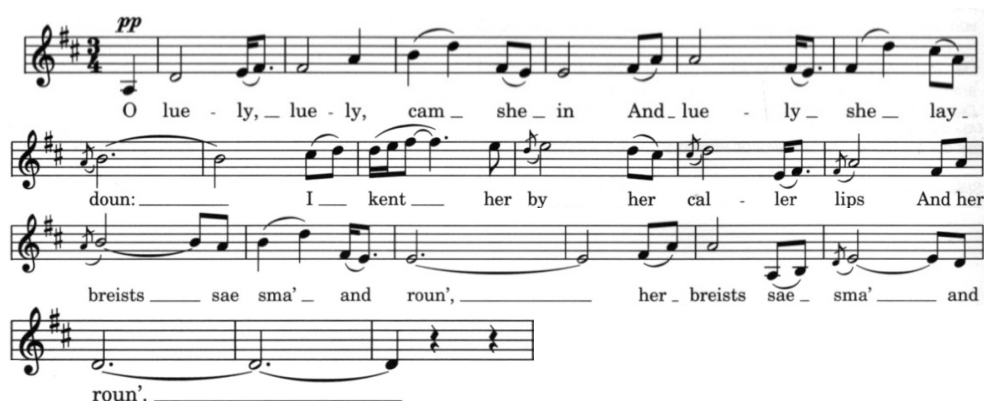
Although it is often distorted and disguised in such a way as to be naturally assimilated into a new context, at other times the melody of *The Tryst* is deliberately juxtaposed against its broader context by being presented in an unashamedly recognizable manner. Three of these thirteen works - *St Anne's Mass*, *St John Passion* and *Miserere* - have already been explored in the conclusion of Chapter Three, concerning the significance of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. It is fitting to address these three works together, for in addition to their inclusion of *The Tryst*, *Miserere* is essentially a choral re-working of the last movement of *St John Passion*, and in quoting the melody of *The Tryst* in the latter, MacMillan was actually quoting the *St Anne's Mass* rather than the original version of *The Tryst*: "It's become a love song for the Church, in the sense that we sing it melodically as a Sanctus [in the *St Anne's Mass*]. It was an absolutely deliberate quotation in the *St John Passion*, mainly because it was a kind of Sanctus, the final movement."²²

The melody's first incarnation however was a short, love ballad, which featured on an album with the folk group, The Whistlebinkies, entitled *Timber Timbre*, and on which the composer himself sang. The Whistlebinkies is a Glasgow group, founded by singer and bodhran-player Mick Broderick, and comprising professional and amateur musicians.²³ Flautist and composer Eddie McGuire is the only member of the group to create in both folk and art genres, and this no doubt influenced the young MacMillan, who set Soutar's love poem *The Tryst* to music in the style of an old Scottish ballad. He sang this song in folk clubs and bars around Scotland with his own folk group, Broadstone,

²² In interview with the composer, 2.11.08.

²³ Munro, 1984: 247.

and later revealed that these performances made a lasting impression on him, as he felt as if he had “tapped into a deep reservoir of shared tradition”.²⁴ A complete verse of the song (later published under the title *Scots Song*) is included below:



Ex. 5.25 MacMillan: *Scots Song*, bb. 1-18 (voice part only)

As mentioned above, this melody was translated into the Sanctus of the St Anne's Mass the following year (1985), and several years after this mass came three more derivations from *The Tryst* in close succession: *Búsqueda* (1988) a music-theatre piece; *After the Tryst* (1988) a miniature for violin and piano; and *Tryst* (1989) a twenty-five minute orchestral tone poem. It is clear from the titles of these latter two works that at this stage in the evolution of the melody, MacMillan was referring to the original context of the love song *The Tryst*, rather than the liturgical nature of the *St Anne's Mass*. In *Búsqueda* however, the religious association is supported by the inclusion of liturgical texts: MacMillan takes the form of the Roman Mass - Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus and Benedictus, and Agnus Dei - as a structure for the work, interspersing these sacred texts with poems of the Mothers of the Plaza di Mayo in Argentina. When the melody of *The Tryst* is heard in the final Agnus Dei section, it offers an ambiguous meaning, implying either a love song – this time the love song of a mother to her lost child, rather than a romantic love song – or a reference to the mass, or both.

²⁴ In interview with the composer, 2.11.08

At bar 318, the F# is eventually introduced, followed by the A two bars later. These are then repeated for several bars, together with the D and the E, until the climax of the phase occurs in bar 324, with the arrival of the B, emphasized by the additional ornamentation:

Musical score for "The Swan" by Camille Saint-Saëns, featuring three staves of piano music. The first staff contains a melodic line with five-measure phrases, marked *f* and *p*. The second staff includes a triplet of eighth notes marked *espress.* and *mf*, followed by a triplet of quarter notes. The third staff begins with a piano introduction marked *pp*, followed by a melodic phrase marked *mf* with a five-measure phrase.

In 1991 it reappeared in another two works: *Tuireadh*, a clarinet quintet written in response to the victims of the Alpha Piper oil rig disaster of 1988; and *Scots Song*, an arrangement of *The Tryst*, for voice and piano. In 1997 MacMillan used a fragment of the melody for the part-song *The Gallant Weaver*, written as a wedding present, and again, a fragment of it occurs in his Cello Sonata No. 1 (1999), so that within a fifteen-year period, it had been reincarnated in a wide variety of genres: folk ballad; congregational mass; chamber piece for voice, violin, or

cello with piano accompaniment; clarinet quintet; music theatre piece; and an orchestral tone poem.

The Gallant Weaver initially quotes the first six notes of *The Tryst* for its opening melody, and for the third phrase, it repeats these same six notes, and includes the seventh note of *The Tryst* (in this case, a top A):



Ex. 5.28 MacMillan: *The Gallant Weaver*, bb. 6-8 (soprano 1 part only)

Thirteen years later, in 2010, MacMillan wrote his most recent work to include a reference to *The Tryst: Lassie, Wad Ye Loe Me?* This is written in a very similar style to *The Gallant Weaver*, once again adopting the genre of part-song. *Lassie, Wad Ye Loe Me?* begins by liberally inverting the first four notes of *The Tryst*, and uses the same rhythm as *The Gallant Weaver*. The example below shows the opening bar of each piece layered upon one another, with the melody of *The Gallant Weaver* shown in the notes with stems pointing down, and the melody of *Lassie, Wad Ye Loe Me?* shown in the notes with stems pointing up. Because the latter is in F major, *The Gallant Weaver* is transposed down a major third from A major to F major, to illustrate its relationship to the later part-song:



Ex. 5.29 MacMillan: *The Gallant Weaver/Lassie, Wad Ye Loe Me?*, b.1 (soprano 1 parts only)

After this first phrase in *Lassie, Wad Ye Loe Me?*, the melody of *The Tryst* is heard, almost exactly as it is heard in *The Gallant Weaver*, using the first six notes of the theme (in this case, C-F-G-A-C-D), and using exactly the same rhythm:



Ex. 5.30 MacMillan: *Lassie, Wad Ye Loe Me?*, bb. 3-5 (soprano 1 part only)

Between these two folk-inspired part-songs however, the melody endured its longest period of absence: eight years between 1999 and 2007. This might be considered a type of gestation period, for when it re-emerged in 2007 in the *St John Passion*, its early religious connection with the *St Anne's Mass* Sanctus was reinforced. MacMillan himself said that it was because people knew the melody specifically from the *St Anne's Mass* that he included in here: "Most people know it now as the Sanctus from that Mass... It's a kind of signal – right through the denominations, they know what it is... That's important for me, that it touches a nerve, sparks a sign".²⁵

While the self-quotations of *The Tryst* in these various works provide a sense of overarching coherence across MacMillan's entire oeuvre, it is particularly with his congregational settings, such as the *Galloway Mass* (discussed in the previous chapter) and the *St Anne's Mass* that MacMillan seeks to unite sacred and secular societies. By taking a melody sung by a congregation and placing it in the new context of a non-liturgical work, the composer invites those church members into the concert hall by offering them an element of aural familiarity. He also invites those who have no connection with any religious body but who have heard his works in concerts to explore the origins of this musical material. The aim is not to fill concert halls with congregations, nor to convert every music-lover to Christianity. Rather, these cross-genre musical quotations help establish a degree of communication between different communities.

²⁵ In interview with the composer, 2.11.08.

Two Unconscious Allusions: 'Violin Concerto' and 'The Confession of Isobel Gowdie'

There are two further instances of *The Tryst* that are distinct from the others, in that they occur as inadvertent references. One of these is fleeting but audibly recognizable, and occurs in the dream-like section of the second movement of MacMillan's Violin Concerto. The first note of the phrase (the dominant anacrusis, which in this case would be an A) is missing, but the next six notes of the phrase are presented in order, and without distortion or embellishment:



Ex. 5.31 MacMillan: *Violin Concerto*, Movement II 'Song', bb. 116-7 (solo violin part only)

Given that MacMillan had used the first seven notes of *The Tryst* for *The Gallant Weaver*, the connection between this extract from his Violin Concerto and *The Tryst* is not so tenuous, even if it is entirely accidental.

The second unconscious reference to *The Tryst* should be treated with some caution, since it is far less explicit. In discussing the complex texture at the beginning of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* for a BBC Radio 3 programme²⁶, MacMillan mentioned the layering of different songs upon one another, and isolates one of these for the sake of analysis, a self-created but folk-inspired line in the second violins at bar 20. However, the composer did not reveal that this melody forms the first seven notes of *The Tryst* melody, with the first five notes in the second violins, and the sixth and seventh notes distributed among the two clarinet parts:

²⁶ *Discovering Music: MacMillan's 'The Confession of Isobel Gowdie.'* MacMillan in interview with Stephen Johnson. BBC Radio 3: 28.2.10.

Clarinet 1

Clarinet 2

Violin II (lower)

Ex. 5.32 MacMillan: *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, bb. 20-24 (clarinet and lower violin 1 parts only)

This might reasonably be discarded as a somewhat tenuous coincidence if it did not occur again, with an even more complete quotation of *The Tryst*, using the first nine notes of melody – i.e. a complete statement of the song’s first phrase. This is hinted at in the lower second violins in bars 32-33 and then presented in full across the divided first and second violin parts at bar 35:

Ex. 5.33 MacMillan: *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, bb. 35-43 (upper and lower first violin and upper second violin parts only)

As the example above clearly demonstrates, a full statement of the first phrase of *The Tryst* is disguised among the upper strings, with the first four notes in the upper first violins, who then pass the melody over to the upper second violins at bar 37. With the exception of the added C and D in the upper second violin in bars 40 and 41, there is no impediment to the melody. In other words, if one were to hear the upper first and second violins alone, without these two added notes in the second violins, one would hear an unobstructed statement of *The*

Tryst. In its full orchestral context however, this quotation becomes utterly obscured by the thick texture, not least because of the lower first violins, who add another layer of disguise by stating *The Tryst* melody in canon with the first violins (beginning one bar later, in bar 36), an octave lower. The only note missing from this statement is the fourth note (B), though since this is still sounding in the upper first violins as the lower first violins play the second and third notes (G and A in bar 37), it is reasonable to assume that the B in the upper first violins (tied over from bar 37 to bar 38) acts as a fourth note for both first violin parts. Such an assumption is supported by the fact that as soon as the upper first violins have finished playing the B and passed the rest of the melody of *The Tryst* over to the upper second violins, the lower first violins also continue with the melody. MacMillan employed the 'rogue' F# in his pentatonic group at the opening of the work, and here too an added F# obscures *The Tryst* in the lower first violins (bar 39), as do the C and D in both the lower first and upper second violin parts in bars 40-43, which delay the desired resolution of the ninth and final note of the melody (B, note '8', falling to A, note '9').

Despite being aurally obscured, the visual presence of this melody is indisputable. If it is claimed that the link is tenuous because the melody is disseminated among various instruments, one could argue that although the quotation of *The Tryst* in *Tryst*, which we have already examined, is confined to a single instrumental part, it is so 'stretched-out' – across nineteen bars in total – that its treatment within that context is not so very far removed from that of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*. When asked about this subtle reference to *The Tryst* in *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, MacMillan replied: "I'm not aware of this!"²⁷ However, the fact that he was not aware of it does not necessarily make it irrelevant. Schoenberg addresses this issue of subliminal self-quotation in his essay, 'Twelve-Tone Composition'. He explains that after writing his *Kammersymphonie No. 1*, Op. 9, he was

²⁷ MacMillan, via email, 13.3.10.

worried about the apparent absence of any relationship between the two principal themes, seen in the example below as themes *a* and *b*:²⁸

Kammersymphonie, Op. 9, E major

a) b) c) d) e) f)

Inversion

Ex. 5.34 Schoenberg: Self-analysis of *Kammersymphonie No. 1*, Op. 9²⁹

Schoenberg states that he was ready to remove theme *b* altogether, and that it was not until twenty years later that he saw the true, highly complex relationship between the two main themes, which his subconscious had revealed to him: “In *c* the true principal tones of the theme are marked, and *d* shows that all the intervals ascend. Their correct inversion *e* produces the first phrase *f* of the theme *b*”.³⁰ He concludes this section of his essay by describing how a composer’s mind can operate subconsciously with a row of tones, regardless of their direction or the way in which a mirror might show the mutual relations.³¹ While Schoenberg is of course referring specifically to twelve-tone composition here, the essence of his discussion can appropriately be applied to the inadvertent inclusion of *The Tryst* in *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*. In addition, given that the latter was

²⁸ Schoenberg, 1975: 222.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Schoenberg, 1975: 223.

³¹ Schoenberg, 1975: 223.

written in 1990, just one year after *Tryst* (1989) and two years after *Búsqueda* and *After the Tryst* (both 1988), all three of which explicitly use the melody of *The Tryst*, it is reasonable to claim that this musical thought unconsciously manifested itself into the thick string textures of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*.

When I asked MacMillan why this particular melody had such great significance for him, he replied somewhat enigmatically:

It might be too early for me to comment on that. Obviously it has had an impact. It's associated with a very important period in my early life – it's a kind of love song in a way, and maybe that's a private love song between me and Lynne. And it became a love song for the Church in the sense that we sing it melodically as a Sanctus [in the *St Anne's Mass*].³²

Having been asked whether he would use the melody of *The Tryst* in future works, he replied simply: "I don't know. Probably".³³ Whether he does or not, the evolution of *The Tryst* in multiple works is undoubtedly the most explicit expression of the composer's fervent promotion of continuing traditions - even within his own compositional output. Like many traditions, it was not originally intended as such, but soon gained additional extramusical resonances, linking the romantic with the sacrificial-religious. In the context of Appendix F1, it is clearly the most dominant of all the 'sources' between 1983 and 2010. Although MacMillan has reused musical material from numerous works in various guises, *The Tryst* is unarguably the most important and fruitful of these reincarnations, revealing the most significant example of his self-retrospective modernism.

³² In interview with the composer, 2.11.08.

³³ Ibid.

Chapter 6. Musical Magpies: Quotation and Polystylism

Picasso stated: "Good artists copy, great artists steal"; Stravinsky claimed: "A good composer does not imitate, he steals"; and similarly T.S. Eliot said: "Immature poets imitate; mature ones steal".¹ The practice of musical 'borrowing' extends throughout the history of the Western Classical tradition. Various processes of adaptation, re-use and reworking similar to those in the older layers of the repertory are apparent in a plethora of tracts, graduals, office antiphons and other genres of chant. For example, the chants of the new Feast of Corpus Christi, first celebrated in 1247, were adapted from chants of the same type with different texts, drawn from more than a dozen other feasts.² It was during the Renaissance that the notion of using a pre-existing melody for a larger work became especially prominent in the proliferation of parody masses. Renaissance parody masses were sometimes based on scandalous, provocative secular songs, and it wasn't until the Council of Trent, in a document dated September 10, 1562, that the use of secular material was banned: "...let nothing profane be intermingled... banish from church all music which contains, whether in the singing or the organ playing, things that are impure".³

In the entry for 'parody' in Grove Online, Tilmouth and Sherr are keen to emphasise the distinction between the practice of parody masses and the use of borrowing material during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

The type of borrowing implied in parody was discredited during the 19th century when originality was sought of a kind that would admit little more than symbolic quotation in major works. Mendelssohn's, Schumann's and later Busoni's arrangements of Bach, or Grieg's toying with Mozart, cannot usefully be compared with the parody mass, which had constituted a main stream in Renaissance music with a contemporaneity quite distinct from that of the Romantic era's intermittent manipulation of music from its remoter past. A creative engagement with earlier music, as opposed to mere pastiche, has been one of the concerns of

¹ Stravinsky, quoted in Patry, 2009: 73.

² <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/52918pg2#S52918.2>>

³ Reese, 1954: 449.

20th-century music. But again, works like Stravinsky's *The Fairy's Kiss* and *Pulcinella*, though exhibiting the kind of interaction of composer and model that was characteristic of 16th-century parody, at the same time indulge a stylistic dichotomy far removed from it.⁴

Joseph Straus concurs with Tilmouth and Sherr's distinction between quoting from a contemporary or recent source and quoting from a historical figure, and he similarly refers to the example of Stravinsky. Straus argues that because of the historical distance between twentieth-century composers and composers of the Baroque, Bach's treatment of Vivaldi remains distinct from Stravinsky's treatment of the Baroque music used for *Pulcinella*, since the latter example includes a "striking stylistic clash".⁵ This is not to suggest that stylistic difference occurs solely through historical distance, (otherwise there would have been no need for Bach to include such titles as *Concerto in the Italian Style*, or the *French Suites*, or the *English Suites*). However the point of distinction Straus rightly emphasises concerns the "striking clash" of styles, which can only come about when the two (or more) styles in question have been separated by a significant period of time. Thus, while the two layers of works such as *Pulcinella* – the original material and the recomposed elements – remain distinct,⁶ Bach's arrangement of Vivaldi reveals quintessentially 'Bachian' characteristics without decontextualising the Baroque context of Vivaldi's original.

Practices such as Pasticcio and the Insertion Aria use material from a medley of composers but from a similar time period and therefore are written in a similar style. Pastiche refers to the employment of a number of different styles, though in music it has adopted a slightly altered definition, implying the adoption of just one particular style subjected to the interpretation of a later style, as in the

⁴http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20937?q=parody&search=quick&pos=3&_start=1#firsthit

⁵ Straus, 1990: 44.

⁶ Ibid.

case of such neoclassical works as Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony*, which imitates Haydn though in an identifiably neoclassical manner.⁷

In the Romantic period we find examples of musical quotation, such as Brahms' various sets of variations on themes by Handel, Haydn and Paganini. It was Paganini's same, twenty-fourth caprice that formed the basis of Rachmaninov's set of variations in *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, which additionally quotes the Dies Irae plainchant, following such models as Berlioz' *Symphonie fantastique*, whose final movement also famously recalls this chant. It is this type of musical borrowing – musical quotation – that is found in many works by MacMillan. While the previous chapter explored MacMillan's musical retrospective modernism from a personal perspective through the practice of self-quotation, the following considers the composer's quotations and borrowings of other composers, in particular polystylists.

Jeanette Bicknell defines a musical quotation as a deliberate evocation within a composition of a different musical work, which can be distinguished from both coincidental similarities between works and plagiarism on the basis of intention: the composer does not mean for the audience to hear the quotation as his or her own.⁸ Vernon Howard claims that a quoted theme sounds conspicuously familiar *against* its secondary background, as if presented for special display.⁹ However, this is not always the case. The most frequently quoted of all Mahler's quoted material is Wagner's 'Ewigkeit' motive, but this is very much integrated into whatever quintessentially Mahlerian context Mahler places it. The same is true of MacMillan's use of *Tristan*, which is, to use Howard's terminology, very seldom 'on display', but is nevertheless present.

The number of composers who have utilized polystylistic techniques and musical quotations in their work is so vast that they cannot possibly all be explored here. The following discussion will

⁷<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e7725?q=pastiche&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit>

⁸ Bicknell, 2001: 185.

⁹ Howard, 1974: 315.

therefore focus on five key exponents of these two, related practices, addressing composers from overlapping time periods, in order to show the development of polystylism from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century. These include Mahler, Ives, Schnittke, Berio and Maxwell Davies. It is thanks to these five composers in particular that MacMillan has been able to cultivate his own, eclectic compositional language, and with the exception of Mahler, he has specifically referred to the composers listed here as sources of inspiration.

The reason for including Mahler in the list is threefold: first there is the historicity of his position in the development of polystylism, as the first composer to incorporate 'low' music into a symphonic context. Second, the similarities between Mahler and MacMillan in terms of self-quotation and the extent to which each composer exercises this practice establishes a direct connection between the two. Finally, and perhaps most importantly in explaining the other composers selected, Mahler provides a thread of continuity throughout these composers: Mahler and Ives shared a close relationship concerning the combination of various musical styles, and much literature has been written focusing of these two composers together (when he was in New York in 1911, Mahler saw the score of Ives' Third Symphony at his music copyist, and was so interested that he asked for a copy, which he took with him back to Europe shortly before his death).¹⁰ The third movement of Berio's *Sinfonia* famously and explicitly uses the Scherzo of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 ('Resurrection') as the basis for the movement. Schnittke wrote an analysis of this movement in the 1970s, exploring the various other instances of quotation,¹¹ and his own music reveals close affinities with Mahler. Finally, the significance of Mahler is evident in the work of Maxwell Davies, most notably his *Second Fantasia*, about which Stephen Pruslin

¹⁰ Morgan, 1978: 81.

¹¹ *The Third Movement of Berio's Sinfonia: Stylistic Counterpoint, Thematic and Formal Unity in Context of Polystylistics, Broadening the Concept of Thematicism*. This was written in the 1970s and can be found in its entirety in Schnittke, 2002: 216-224.

has suggested parallels with Mahler's Ninth Symphony, Stephen Arnold has mentioned the Tenth, and Maxwell Davies himself has admitted the piece owes a great deal to Mahler's Third Symphony.¹²

It is the explicit musical quotations included in works by these five composers that make them especially relevant to MacMillan. This applies neither to the neoclassicism of Stravinsky or Prokofiev, nor to the historical allusions of composers such as Ligeti. About Ligeti's Second String Quartet, Paul Griffiths mentions the background presence of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, as well as Bartók, Debussy, Berg and Webern, but claims that he evokes rather than quotes, and these evocations are so fine and vague as to be registered only indirectly, to be felt lying beyond the work's horizon.¹³ Thus, because of his preference for vague allusion rather than explicit quotation, Ligeti is not fundamental to the present discussion.

The five chosen composers present a logical evolution of polystylism, with each figure developing from the last. Moreover, each of these composers offers his own type of polystylism: the integration of disparate musical styles in Mahler; the joy of juxtaposition in Ives; Ivesian juxtaposition taken further and the identification of oneself as part of a historical musical tradition in Berio; a commentary on Mahler, Ives and Berio in Schnittke, as well as a reaffirmation of the Mahlerian and Ivesian sentiment to bridge the gap between 'high' and 'low' music; and Maxwell Davies, who simultaneously pokes fun at musical history and pays homage to it. MacMillan has written works resembling all these types of polystylism, and continues Schnittke's ethos, not only by bridging the gap between 'serious' and 'light' music, but also by using this musical fusion to bridge the gap between different social groups. The polystylism of these composers in particular has played a fundamental role in the development of MacMillan's retrospective modernism, where progression is nurtured simultaneously with a respect for the past.

¹² Griffiths, 1982: 36.

¹³ Griffiths, 1983: 71.

MacMillan and Mahler: An Integrated Approach

It is the integration of other composers and other musical styles that is particularly evident in Mahler, as well as certain works by MacMillan. While artistic ‘borrowing’ may have been promoted by Stravinsky, T.S. Eliot and Picasso, arts critics have been far more divided about the practice. About the premiere of MacMillan’s *St John Passion* in 2007, one critic wrote:

The result... is an unashamedly old-fashioned work that summons all sorts of familiar sounds and coats them with an easy-on-the-ear modern veneer. Unlike the styles he raids, very little of MacMillan’s music sounds original. It has its own personality, to be sure, but the personality is that of a stylistic magpie.¹⁴

A century earlier, the attitudes of critics were very similar, for Mahler received almost identical assessments of his music:

The music critics of Germany and Austria [in 1900] considered Mahler’s music far from unique and personal; on the contrary, they regarded it as a jumble of borrowings and reminiscences... Mahler had simply attempted to “produce superficial effects” with material he had collected from all over the place.¹⁵

In addition, it is interesting that the very notion of a musical magpie – i.e. a composer who steals from other composers – is an analogy that has been used on other occasions with reference to MacMillan, such as by Stephen Johnson on BBC Radio 3 in 2010, and almost two decades earlier by the composer himself, who admitted how open he felt to “resonances from the past, and to [his] own traditions” and described his attitude as being not antiquarian or folklorist but “magpie-like”.¹⁶

Neither Mahler nor MacMillan suffered from a loss of confidence in response to such criticisms. La Grange writes that Mahler’s “confidence in himself and in his destiny as a composer was never seriously shaken by the critics’ reproaches”¹⁷, which is reminiscent of one of the most widely used quotations about MacMillan’s music: “...a

¹⁴ Clark, *The Financial Times*, 29.4.08.

¹⁵ La Grange, 1997: 123.

¹⁶ MacMillan in Monelle, 1997: 102.

¹⁷ La Grange, 1997: 124.

composer so confident of his own musical language that he makes it instantly communicative to his own listeners”.¹⁸

Mahler also provides a particularly appropriate model to compare with MacMillan in this study, since La Grange’s findings take into account all the works Mahler wrote until his death, at the age of fifty, and the findings presented in Appendix C are based on all the works MacMillan has written up to the age of fifty-one (2010). However, even if all La Grange’s findings were conscious quotations, MacMillan would still exhibit a greater number of musical quotations in his works.

La Grange claims that no composer before Mahler had thought of transforming preexistent *lieder* into symphonic movements, which Mahler did repeatedly, introducing *lieder* into the symphonies in such a way as to form an “organic” whole.¹⁹ He defends this point, arguing that while Schubert’s dances and *lieder*, Chopin’s mazurkas and *Chants polonais*, and Brahms’s *Hungarian Dances* and *Volkslieder* also derive their inspiration from folk music for songs, dances and character pieces, they do so relatively rarely in large-scale works such as symphonies.²⁰ This notion of an “organic whole” is significant, since it concerns the manner in which Mahler presents this borrowed musical material. Mahler may reasonably be considered the first true ‘polystylist’, though the associations with that term, especially the juxtaposition of contrasting elements, do not apply so strongly to Mahler as they do with subsequent polystylists of the twentieth century. However, *both* of these approaches – the synthesis *and* the juxtaposition of stylistically and historically remote music – occur in MacMillan’s music, and thus before turning our attention to the more ‘standard’, collage effect of polystylism, it is worth considering some examples by MacMillan in conjunction with Mahler’s more integrated handling of disparate musical materials.

¹⁸ *The Guardian*, n.d.: <http://www.boosey.com/pages/cr/composer/composer_main.asp?composerid=2799&>

¹⁹ La Grange, 1997: 142-3.

²⁰ La Grange, 1997: 125.

La Grange cites fifty-one examples of literal quotations from other composers' music found in Mahler, including numerous references to Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, Chopin, Bizet and Wagner. However, Mahler's kleptomaniac approach incorporated musical styles beyond the Western classical tradition. The First Symphony alone provides examples of such diversity: the self-quotation of the folk-song-like "Ging heut' Morgen übers Feld", recycled from the second of the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* in the first movement; and two further popular styles are evident in the third movement. This comprises three musical elements, including a quotation, an imitation, and a self-quotation: in the initial A Section, Mahler famously quotes the melody of the nursery rhyme *Bruder Martin (Frère Jacques)*, which begins with a solo double bass, set in a melancholic D minor to represent a funeral march. By contrast the B section imitates lively Klezmer music, beginning with a stumbling entry of the Hasidic-Yiddish music idiom. Finally, the C Section consists of a self-quotation from the fourth of Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* – 'Die zwei Augen von meinem Schatz'.²¹

Mahler generally favours vertical rather than horizontal polystylism, such that the simultaneous presentation of disparate musical styles is relatively rare, compared to Ives and later polystylists. Instead, Mahler treats different musical styles in a more conversational manner, offering one, followed by another. The three sections of the third movement of the First Symphony provide a clear example of this, and this movement represents arguably the earliest instance of polystylism.²² Each section of the music itself is clearly defined and concludes the bar before the next begins. Mahler himself revealed that the B section referred to motley Bohemian street-bands, and Karbusický claims that this Czech-Bohemian element blends musically

²¹ Karbusický, 2005: 207-8.

²² There are, inevitably, incidents from earlier composers which have polystylistic tendencies. Famous examples include Mozart's *'Dissonance' Quartet*, Rebel's *Les Elements*, or Biber's *Battalia*. However, these are isolated examples, and did not evolve into a new, polystylistic style. In the case of the latter two examples, the harsh use of dissonance was employed to create a specific effect, representing either wounded soldiers (Biber) or chaos at the beginning of time (Rebel).

with the Hasidic-Yiddish: “the one cannot be separated from the other”.²³ Despite the stylistic shift to this ‘band-music’, the latter is included in such a way that it emerges out of the A Section naturally, rather than by jarring dissociation, and the same is true of the C Section, where Mahler once again self-quotes from his earlier *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*. Like several songs and part-songs by MacMillan, the songs of this early cycle use original melodies by Mahler composed in a folk style, and the reference to Bohemian street-bands not only relates to this popular tradition but also to Mahler’s Jewish roots.

The fact that Mahler self-quotes from not just one but two of the four songs from his *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, in the first and third movements of the First Symphony respectively, invites a programmatic interpretation of the symphony in light of this song-cycle. The first movement of the cycle, which is not quoted in the symphony, refers to the anguish of the narrator as he realizes the girl with whom he is in love is to marry another. Perhaps the Klezmer music is part of these wedding celebrations, though with an ironic cheerfulness, for Mahler indicates in the score that it is to be played ‘Mit Parodie’, and the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* opens with the lines: “When my love becomes a bride, becomes a happy bride, that will be my saddest day”.²⁴ The fourth song of the cycle appears only at the end of the symphonic movement, beginning with the text: “The two blue eyes of my love, they’ve sent me out into the wide world, so I had to take my leave of the town so dear to me!”²⁵ Within this movement, Mahler therefore implies his Jewish identity through Klezmer music, a sense of alienation as a result of his Jewish identity, and the joy of marriage coupled with the grief of the spurned lover, and eventually his death in the funeral march.

In terms of both musical and narrative elements, the third movement of Mahler’s First Symphony shares much common ground with a very different-sounding piece by MacMillan. The clearly defined

²³ Karbusický, 2005: 209.

²⁴ Cooke, 1980: 31.

²⁵ Cooke, 1980: 33.

three-character structure of the symphony's penultimate movement bears a great resemblance to the vertically organized elements of MacMillan's eccentric concert overture *Stomp (with Fate and Elvira)*, which also comprises three characters: fate, Elvira Madigan, and a ceilidh. Elvira Madigan was a nineteenth-century Swedish tightrope walker. While performing in Sweden with her stepfather's circus, she met a Swedish cavalry officer, Lieutenant Count Bengt Edvard Sixten Sparre. They formed an ill-fated relationship, for Sparre was married and the father of two children. After exchanging love letters for a year, they ran away together to Denmark in June 1889. When they ran out of money a month later, they packed a picnic basket, went out to the Nørreskov ('North forest') on the island of Tåsinge and ate a last meal, after which Sparre shot Madigan and himself. Sparre was thirty-five years old, Madigan just twenty-one years old.

The three characters are represented by three musical voices. Rather than including a quotation, an imitation and a self-quotation, as in the Mahler movement, MacMillan includes two musical quotations and an imitation: Tchaikovsky (the fate motive of his Fourth Symphony); Mozart (the main theme of the second movement of the Twenty-First Piano Concerto); and original, ceilidh-like music, which opens and closes the piece, as well as returning very conspicuously in the middle. The reasons for choosing the Mozart and Tchaikovsky works are straightforward: when the eponymous Swedish film about Elvira Madigan was made in 1967, it made prominent use of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 to the extent that the concerto is often referred to as the 'Elvira Madigan Concerto'. Just over a decade before Sparre and Madigan died, Tchaikovsky wrote his fate-dominated Fourth Symphony, between 1877 and 1878, hence MacMillan's brief programme note to explain these musical references:

The dark, brooding cloud of fate, that had been hovering over St Petersburg, lifted and drifted west to Sweden, where it made an amorous encounter with a young tightrope walker, Elvira Madigan. They eloped, and headed west again, ending up at a ceilidh in Kilkenny or Kilmarnock, or somewhere...²⁶

The organisation of the three elements in *Stomp (with Fate and Elvira)* is outlined below, together with musical examples of these three characters:

A Section (Ceilidh) = bb. 1-27

B Section (Tchaikovsky/Fate) = bb. 28-36

C Section (Mozart/Elvira) = bb. 37-54

A Section attempts to return, but unsuccessfully = bb. 55-59.

B Section returns and is slightly extended = bb. 60-76

C Section returns briefly = bb. 77-85

A Section returns at b. 86 and remains until the work's conclusion. It is joined by the B Section at bar 109, and both are sustained until the final bar (b. 119)

The image shows a musical score for three trumpet parts (labeled 1, 2, and 3) in common time (C). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 1-4. In measure 1, all three parts play a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. In measure 2, the parts play a half note C5, followed by a quarter note D5, and then a half note E5. In measure 3, the parts play a half note F5, followed by a quarter note G5, and then a half note A5. In measure 4, the parts play a half note B5, followed by a quarter note C6, and then a half note D6. The dynamic marking *ff* *giocososo (dancing)* is present in measures 1-3. In measure 4, the dynamic marking *sfz* is present. The second system covers measures 5-8. In measure 5, the parts play a half note E5, followed by a quarter note F5, and then a half note G5. In measure 6, the parts play a half note A5, followed by a quarter note B5, and then a half note C6. In measure 7, the parts play a half note D6, followed by a quarter note E6, and then a half note F6. In measure 8, the parts play a half note G6, followed by a quarter note A6, and then a half note B6. The dynamic marking *mp* is present in measures 5-6, and *ff* is present in measures 7-8.

Ex. 6.1 MacMillan: *Stomp (with Fate and Elvira)*, bb. 1-4 (trumpet parts only) – 'A Section - Ceilidh'

²⁶ MacMillan, 2007: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Stomp-with-Fate-and-Elvira/51430>>

Trombone 1 *ff*

Trombone 2 *ff*

Bass Trombone *ff*

Tuba *ff*

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

B. Tbn.

Tba.

Ex. 6.2 MacMillan: *Stomp (with Fate and Elvira)*, bb. 28-31 (trombone and tuba parts only) – ‘B Section – Fate/Tchaikovsky’

Andante normale (meno mosso, nocturnal)

Trumpet in C *con sord*

Violin I *con sord*

Violin I *con sord*

Violin II *con sord*

Violin II

p elegant, calm, flowing

p elegant, calm, flowing

p elegant, calm, flowing

pp

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vln. II

Ex. 6.3 MacMillan: *Stomp (with Fate and Elvira)*, bb. 37-40 (trumpet 1, upper div. violin 1 and upper div. violin 2 parts only) – ‘C Section – Mozart/Elvira’

Only in the concluding eleven bars of the piece (bb. 109-119) are the Tchaikovsky and ceilidh themes layered upon one another. The Mozart reference appears by itself, and MacMillan imitates Mahler by explicitly quoting a very well-known major-key melody and placing it in a minor key. For Mahler, this transformation results in the *Bruder Martin* funeral march, whereas MacMillan's treatment of the second movement of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 implies a sinister, dream-like state.

MacMillan's concert overture also resembles the aforementioned Mahlerian movement to an extraordinary degree with regard to its programme: both establish their own ethnicity through dance music that is intrinsically bound to a certain culture, be it Jewish Klezmer music or the Scottish ceilidh; both refer to the union (wedding or elopement) of a young girl, either directly (MacMillan) or indirectly (Mahler); both include a sense of cultural alienation, with Mahler's character fleeing from his home town and Elvira and her lover running away from Sweden in search of a life together in Denmark; and both conclude with the inevitability of fate, resulting in death.

It is worth stressing at this point another and more important distinction between Mahler's quotations and those of later polystylist composers, which is nevertheless relevant to MacMillan: inadvertent quotation. Julian Johnson admires La Grange's fifty-one findings of various quotations in Mahler's music, but is unconvinced that such references are intentional, while David Schiff argues it was not that Mahler was overwhelmed by tradition, but rather that he brought that tradition to a crisis by allowing its internal tensions to come to the fore in his own music.²⁷ While Johnson and Schiff expose some of La Grange's list of references as tenuous enough to warrant doubt as to whether they were intended quotations, it is clear that some of these quotations (such as Wagner's 'Ewigkeit' motive) were indisputably deliberate.

Intentional and inadvertent instances of borrowings from other composers therefore seem to be characteristic of each composer's

²⁷ Schiff in Johnson, 2009: 154.

music: Mahler criticized himself for having unconsciously introduced reminiscences of Beethoven and Brahms into his Fourth Symphony, and there have been several occasions where MacMillan has unintentionally quoted others, such as the distinctive closing chord progression of Britten's *War Requiem* that is replicated – at the same pitch – in the 'Crucifixus' section at the end of the fourth movement of *St John Passion*. This employs the 'Crucifixus' of the Latin Credo (Chant III). Just as Britten fuses the text of the Latin requiem mass with the poetry of Wilfred Owen, MacMillan combines the ancient and modern musically, using the plainchant of Credo III in the soprano part and harmonizing it with the distinctly recognizable concluding chords of the *War Requiem*. MacMillan even uses the same key as Britten, shifting chromatically from F# major in the second bar of this 'Crucifixus' section to F major in the third, as Britten does in the penultimate and final bars:



Ex. 6.4 *Crucifixus* plainchant (Credo III)

Ex. 6.5 MacMillan: *St John Passion*, Movement IV, bb. 100-106 (chorus part only)

The image shows a musical score for four staves, likely representing different vocal parts. The music is in 3/2 time. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The third staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The fourth staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The music features a 'div.' (divisi) section. The lyrics 'A - men, A - - - men.' are written below the staves. The dynamics are marked 'ppp dim.' and 'pppp'.

Ex. 6.6 Britten: *War Requiem*, concluding three bars

Yet it is extraordinary that MacMillan has confirmed that this ‘quotation’ was included inadvertently.²⁸ This reference to the *War Requiem* in the *St John Passion* acknowledges the weight of musical history MacMillan bears, not unlike Mahler, whose musical quotations were sometimes deliberate but at other times were included as the result of a long-standing musical tradition.

However it may be argued that inadvertent quotations are nevertheless quotations. To return to Birknell, who claims a musical quotation must be deliberate, we should also note that she states: “A quoted passage does not cease to be quotational if some listeners are unfamiliar with it”.²⁹ This means that if a composer inadvertently quotes, it cannot be called a quotation, but if he/she intentionally quotes and the audience does not recognize this as a quotation, it remains a quotation. In other words, the definition of a quotation is subject to the intention of the composer and not the audience’s ability to recognize it. But what if the audience recognizes it as an inadvertent quotation? Why should, for example, the numerous inadvertent quotations critics found in Mahler’s symphonies, or the clearly identifiable reference to Britten’s *War Requiem* in MacMillan’s *St John Passion* not be considered quotations, albeit inadvertent quotations?

²⁸ In conversation with the composer, 11.2.11.

²⁹ Birknell, 2001: 186.

Certainly they should be treated very differently to intended quotations, but they remain quotations nevertheless. They may appropriately be defined as 'haunted quotations': instances of composers unintentionally evoking the ghosts of their musical predecessors – examples of accidental retrospective modernism.

Johnson comments:

Mahler was not a neoclassicist, let alone some kind of proto-postmodernist. He does not play with allusion, quotation, intertextuality, or borrowed voices for deliberate effect, to question the nature of musical expression in the face of the conventionality of musical language. But his music does. In spite of its composer, Mahler's music makes audible, in its structural disjunctions and the surface breaks of its musical voice, the strain of a musical tradition that bulges at the seams with the weight of its own accrued past.³⁰

While it may be inappropriate to label Mahler a neoclassicist or a postmodernist, one might reasonably argue that he was the first (and subtlest) polystylist. Even if we were to discount the various historical models of Beethoven, Bruckner, Brahms and many others who intentionally or unintentionally appear in Mahler's music, the number of works explicitly referring to other musical styles – bohemian street-band music, folk music, popular melodies – are legion. In terms of arguing for Mahler as the first polystylist therefore, the debate of whether or not quotations from earlier composers was deliberate or not is irrelevant. It was the combination of musical styles, from both the Western Classical tradition and folk and popular idioms, that make Mahler such an important figure for subsequent polystylists throughout the twentieth century. Despite having never mentioned Mahler as an influence, MacMillan, together with all later polystylists, is indebted to Mahler for this innovatory combination of high and low art forms. There is one notable exception to this however, living outside the European tradition, who developed a very different-sounding type of polystylism: Charles Ives.

³⁰ Johnson, 2009: 163.

MacMillan and Ives: A Juxtapositional Approach

Because of its lack of an established musical tradition – especially in comparison to the European tradition – the music of American composers is often regarded as relatively ‘past-less’. Morgan claims this outlook has characterised much of the critical writing on Charles Ives, who is considered as “a sort of innocent at home, a noble savage who, unencumbered by the strictures of inherited conventions, was able to create a radically new kind of music largely independent of the forces of European music history.”³¹ Morgan argues that such a view is impoverished, and draws upon various similarities between the two composers in an attempt to show why Ives may be regarded in the Western musical tradition in the same way as Mahler. He mentions the common incorporation of “popular” or even “low-life” flavours in each composer’s work; a process of defamiliarizing familiar objects; and the use of musical quotation.³²

While this is true, there remains an important point of distinction where Morgan’s argument is unconvincing. This refers to the aforementioned musical tradition and sense of place in history. Unintentionally perhaps, Mahler evoked the music of his predecessors, and clearly felt the gargantuan Austro-German tradition that weighed down upon him. However, this was not the case for Ives, and it is impossible to argue otherwise, given the geographical and cultural distance between America and Europe. This awareness of tradition was acute in Mahler, in both a positive and negative way, and in the next section it will be made apparent how this dualistic approach to the past was emulated and exaggerated by Berio. Ives, however, did not feel the burden of this musical tradition, even though he was clearly aware of it: he recalls how his exploration of such a wide range of musical styles was encouraged by the attitude of his father, George, who “filled [him] up with Bach and the best of the classical music, and the study of

³¹ Morgan, 1978: 72.

³² Morgan, 1978: 74.

harmony and counterpoint etc., and musical history”.³³ Although he was schooled in this European classical tradition, he was nevertheless culturally removed from it. He turned to his own culture, drawing upon his native, American musical tradition comprising hymn tunes, popular songs and marching-band melodies. While it is undeniably true that this interest in popular idioms resembles Mahler to a great extent, Ives does not suffer from the inadvertent quotations to Brahms or Bruckner that plagued Mahler: he lacked the sense of a classical musical tradition of one’s own native country being thrust upon a composer.

This is an important point of distinction between Ives and the other polystylists mentioned in this chapter, and a point of similarity between Ives and MacMillan. It also reveals a great irony in the composers’ responses to tradition, with regard to their nationality: when a composer is born into a country with a long-established musical tradition, he feels its pressure, and either accepts this tradition with some difficulty (Mahler, Berio, Maxwell Davies) or seeks to rid himself of it (Boulez, Stockhausen); when he is born into a nation without such a tradition, he actively seeks any musical traditions – past and contemporary – in order to gain a sense of ‘belonging’. This was as true for Ives as an American as it is for MacMillan as a Scot. MacMillan himself recognises this affinity with Ives, and his admiration for the composer’s almost self-taught originality is expressed in his ‘Music and Modernity’ speech:

Charles Ives was the first great non-European modernist and it is argued that he owed nothing of his originality to Europe... his great experiments in polytonality, polyrhythm, tone clusters, aleatoricism (the creation of music randomly) and quarter tones, come from a different place philosophically and sociologically from those generated later in France, Germany and Italy. Fundamental to everything in Ives's imagination were hymn tunes and traditional songs, patriotic songs, the sentimental pop songs of the day, the melodies of Stephen Foster, the music of the dance halls and American popular culture — in fact, everything that the European liberal elites would later despise.³⁴

³³ Ives, quoted in Burkholder, 1985: 47.

³⁴ MacMillan, 2009: <<http://www.standpointmag.co.uk/node/2358/full>>

It is unsurprising that MacMillan considers Ives in a favourable light, and there can be no doubt that the American composer was an important influence on him. Both composers combined musical styles, borrowing from the European tradition of Germany, Austria and France, but both also sought to introduce a distinctively personal, national sound to their music, such that Ives almost always sounds 'quintessentially American', while MacMillan almost always sounds 'quintessentially Scottish', but neither as a result of the American or Scottish classical composers who preceded them.

In addition to national identity, MacMillan and Ives also share a common taste for musical juxtaposition. Morgan frequently mentions the juxtaposition of elements in the works of both Ives and Mahler, and certainly if the latter did not employ such a strong diversity of musical styles, it would make no sense to call him a polystylist. However, although there are rude interruptions in many of Mahler's symphonies, these are rarely as extreme as those found in Ives' music. In the majority of cases where Mahler uses pre-existing material, he 'softens' its edges when placing it in the context of his musical work. He by no means softens these edges completely, but he does so to a greater degree than Ives, whose juxtaposition of musical styles is arguably more explicit. The opening of Mahler's Fourth Symphony, the sleigh-ride theme that begins the work, soon gives way to a subject sounding as if it were written in the Classical period, but it does so by means of a *rallentando*. By contrast, the three characters of Ives' iconic *The Unanswered Question* not only remain on three entirely independent levels, but when the increasingly agitated quartet of flutes interacts with the serenity of the strings, they 'cut in' aggressively, as if being inserted at a sharp right-angle. Furthermore, Mahler never wrote anything as extreme as a fugue in four different keys.³⁵ With Ives, the collage effect of disparate elements is almost always more pronounced, and the effect is more harsh.

³⁵ Ives famously wrote *Fugue in Four Keys 'On The Shining Shore'* for flute, cornet and strings in 1902.

It is this harshness that MacMillan replicates in some of his music, and numerous writers and journalists have used the adjective 'Ivesian' to describe certain works by MacMillan (while none has ever described his music as 'Mahlerian'). In Chapter Two, several works reflecting MacMillan's relationship to Scotland revealed a distinctly Ivesian collage of materials, such as in Piano Concerto No. 2, *A Scotch Bestiary* and *Sinfonietta*, but arguably the most Ivesian of all MacMillan's works is the concert overture, *Britannia*. Written in 1994 to fulfil a commission from British Telecommunications plc with the Association of British Orchestras as part of the BT Celebration Series, *Britannia* is a fifteen-minute orchestral piece based on 'patriotic themes'. In his programme note for the work, MacMillan explains that although there is no programme of story, "the tapestry of popular melodies and resonant allusions, given their new and unfamiliar contexts, may provoke some surprising scenarios in the mind of the listener, particularly at a time when petty chauvinism threatens to rear up once again throughout Europe."³⁶ *Britannia* is simultaneously amusing and disturbing: a celebration of the British orchestra and of British music in general, but also a warning of the dangerously thin distinction between national pride and xenophobia.

The piece stems from a short sketch written earlier in the same year, *Mémoire Impériale*, which in turn is based on a march tune by General Reid, the eighteenth-century British army officer who established the music department at Edinburgh University, where MacMillan studied for his Bachelor of Music degree. The composer explains that "this theme and the 'imperial' themes of Elgar and Arne are thrown into a volatile concoction with other materials – an Irish reel (which becomes a jig), a Cockney drinking song, other march tunes and a hazy Celtic modality."³⁷ The Elgar and Arne examples are from the *Cockaigne Overture* and 'Rule Britannia!', from Arne's *Alfred*, while the Cockney drinking song is *Knees up, Mother Brown*. It is the latter that

³⁶ MacMillan, 1994: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Britannia/3918>>

³⁷ Ibid.

leads straight into the Elgar reference, so that within just eight bars, the listener is presented with four clearly recognisable references to four different musical styles. The British national anthem (*God save the Queen*) which begins here with its second phrase, (“send her victorious, happy and glorious”, played with a syncopated rhythm by the trumpets, bb. 58-61) is rudely interrupted by the climactic chord of MacMillan’s own *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*:

The image shows a musical score for measures 58-62 of MacMillan's *Britannia*, featuring trumpet and string parts. The score is written for two trumpets, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The trumpets play a syncopated rhythm with triplets, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The strings play a melodic line with dynamics ranging from forte (*f*) to mezzo-piano (*mp*) to fortissimo (*ff*). The Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass parts include trills and tremolos, marked with fortissimo (*ff*) dynamics. The score is in 2/4 time and features a key signature of one flat.

Ex. 6.7 MacMillan: *Britannia*, bb. 58-62 (trumpet and string parts only)

God save the Queen is then allowed to continue in the woodwind (“long to reign over us”), while a solo trombone simultaneously plays the Cockney song *Knees Up, Mother Brown*, during which the string parts become busier in preparation for another musical symbol of Britain, and an appropriate piece to succeed *Knees up Mother Brown*: Elgar’s Cockney-inspired *Cockaigne Overture*, creating three different musical

ideas layered on top of each other, two at a time (only in bar 65 do all three themes briefly overlap):

This musical score excerpt covers measures 63 to 65. The instruments shown are Oboe (Ob.), Trombone (Tbn.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (Db.).

- Oboe (Ob.):** Measures 63-64 feature a melodic line starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5, with trills and triplets. Dynamics range from *mf* to *ff*. In measure 65, the oboe plays a triplet of eighth notes.
- Trombone (Tbn.):** Measures 63-64 feature a melodic line starting on G2, moving to A2, B2, and C3, with trills and triplets. Dynamics range from *f* to *ff*. In measure 65, the trombone plays a triplet of eighth notes.
- Violins (Vln. I & II):** Measures 63-64 feature a melodic line starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5, with trills and triplets. Dynamics range from *f* to *mp*. In measure 65, the violins play a triplet of eighth notes.
- Viola (Vla.):** Measures 63-64 feature a melodic line starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5, with trills and triplets. Dynamics range from *f* to *mp*. In measure 65, the viola plays a triplet of eighth notes.
- Violoncello (Vc.) and Double Bass (Db.):** Measures 63-64 feature a melodic line starting on G2, moving to A2, B2, and C3, with trills and triplets. Dynamics range from *f* to *mp*. In measure 65, the cello and bass play a triplet of eighth notes.

This musical score excerpt covers measures 66 to 68. The instruments shown are Oboe (Ob.), Trombone (Tbn.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Double Bass (Db.).

- Oboe (Ob.):** Measures 66-68 feature a melodic line starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5, with trills and triplets. Dynamics range from *f* to *ff*. In measure 69, the oboe plays a triplet of eighth notes.
- Trombone (Tbn.):** Measures 66-68 feature a melodic line starting on G2, moving to A2, B2, and C3, with trills and triplets. Dynamics range from *f* to *ff*. In measure 69, the trombone plays a triplet of eighth notes.
- Violins (Vln. I & II):** Measures 66-68 feature a melodic line starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5, with trills and triplets. Dynamics range from *f* to *mp*. In measure 69, the violins play a triplet of eighth notes.
- Viola (Vla.):** Measures 66-68 feature a melodic line starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and C5, with trills and triplets. Dynamics range from *f* to *mp*. In measure 69, the viola plays a triplet of eighth notes.
- Violoncello (Vc.) and Double Bass (Db.):** Measures 66-68 feature a melodic line starting on G2, moving to A2, B2, and C3, with trills and triplets. Dynamics range from *f* to *mp*. In measure 69, the cello and bass play a triplet of eighth notes.

Ex. 6.8 MacMillan: *Britannia*, bb. 63-8 (oboe, trombone and string parts only)

The Confession of Isobel Gowdie was premiered at the BBC Proms, and MacMillan continues the references to this famous British music festival by employing fog-horns in the percussion parts of *Britannia*. These are often heard during the Last Night of the Proms each year, sounding from people in the audience who press the fog-horns at various points throughout the concert for comic effect. At the conclusion of *Britannia* however, this humorous effect is transformed into a far more sinister sound: the vibrant orchestra becomes completely still, and the only accompaniment to the rude outbursts of the fog-horn is the divided strings, playing harmonics *pianississimo*, before the work concludes with four, ominous C#s from the timpani and pizzicato cellos and double basses.

While these stylistic clashes are admittedly very reminiscent of Ives, there are several significant aspects that distinguish MacMillan from the American composer, such as the very purpose of composing music. Unlike the music of Danbury or the vernacular music Ives wrote at Yale, which always served a specific purpose within a community context, the genres and forms that Horatio Parker introduced him to at Yale were part of a tradition that conceived of music as an end in itself, not simply for a practical purpose.³⁸ Ives adopted both the genres and the attitudes of this tradition, and retained the conception of music as a private rather than a community experience for the rest of his life – a tendency which intensified during the period of his isolation from 1902 on.³⁹ He wrote no more music for organ solo or church music after 1902, and when he left his position at Central Presbyterian Church, he left behind most of his choral and organ music, in essence leaving behind not only a position, but also the genres and purposes for the music associated with it.⁴⁰

This is emphatically not the case for MacMillan, who has written congregational music since 1985, and whose contribution to this genre

³⁸ Burkholder, 1985: 83.

³⁹ Burkholder, 1985: 83-4.

⁴⁰ Burkholder, 1985: 84.

has increased considerably since the turn of the twenty-first century. Unlike Ives, MacMillan continues to write 'purely' in these non-artistic idioms. In writing three congregational mass settings, simple choral motets and a new psalm each week (as discussed in the Chapter Four), MacMillan responded to a practical need that didn't affect Ives. Ives loved the hymn tunes sung at the church he attended; MacMillan lamented over the state of post-Vatican II church music, and therefore sought to remedy the situation in his local parish church, and beyond.

In addition, this comparison of MacMillan and Ives raises another important point of distinction between each composer's use of musical quotations. Although it has been shown that in certain instances MacMillan's insertion of musical quotations resembles Mahler's disrupted but integrated manner, while at other times he models this practice on the sharp juxtaposition of musical styles used by Ives, his purpose for such quotations differs from both these composers. Mahler was, willingly or unwillingly, continuing and developing the Austro-German tradition he had inherited, but Ives' quotations have often been referred to in conjunction with the idea of nostalgia. Metzger has described Ives' nostalgia as something fuelled by an uncertain and unfulfilling present, a search that leads to a roseate past created in the present, such as Ives's own idyllic small-town nineteenth-century America.⁴¹

This could not be further removed from MacMillan's vision of Scotland, which looks back to the past not to remember idyllic times but often quite the opposite. From the early Piano Sonata, to *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*, to Piano Concerto No. 2, MacMillan has frequently looked back on Scotland's history in despair:

There is a worrying trend towards nostalgia – towards reinventing the past in its most utopian sense, but I've never ever thought of myself as being part of that movement. People try to project back into the past to give special justification for their feelings about current things. And so Columba and some of the other early Celtic saints are talked about as being prototype eco-warriors or as having feminist tendencies... [People] think that the past, in

⁴¹ Metzger, 2003: 19.

this case the ancient past, was better and that's nostalgia, pure and simple. I've never been seduced by that aspect of Celticism.⁴²

The retrospection, quotation and polystylism of Ives make him stylistically close to MacMillan in many cases, yet the purpose of these gestures is different, for there is little sense of nostalgia in MacMillan's oeuvre. Even in their attempts to establish their nationality in their music, the two composers differ, for MacMillan only became interested in Scottish folk music when he was an undergraduate student at Edinburgh University; it was by no means a natural part of the aural environment in which he was raised. This fact, coupled with the numerous criticisms rather than fond reminiscences of his country's history, distinguishes the meaning of MacMillan's historical musical references from the intention behind Ives' inclusion of songs from his boyhood. Ives was retrospective and a modernist, but not a retrospective modernist, in that he did not share MacMillan's concern for the *relationship* between past and present. Ives wrote music that was profoundly forward-looking, but he also escaped into the nostalgia of an idealistic past. For MacMillan, the past is not a safe haven brimming with memories of better times, but a necessary part of understanding how we operate today: it reminds us of values to be treasured and nurtured, but also of previous mistakes to be avoided.

MacMillan and Berio: *Búsqueda*, and Compartmental Disintegration

Little sense of nostalgia is to be found in the music of Berio, who was undoubtedly one of the most significant figures with regard to MacMillan's retrospective modernism. Like MacMillan, Berio firmly upheld the notion that the issues of the present can only be properly addressed once the issues of the past have been accepted and understood. This concept was passed on to the young MacMillan in the 1980s not only through Berio's interviews, but also in his music.

⁴² MacMillan in Johnson and Sutton, 1997: 28.

The most typical style of MacMillan's music (and the style for which the composer has become best known) only came into fruition after the composer reached a psychological crisis in 1988. Having compartmentalised many aspects of his character, MacMillan gradually began to see the divisions between these various passions crumble. It might be argued that by destroying his own personal barriers, he also broke down barricades that cordoned himself off from the public, for it was about this time that MacMillan's career became prominent, especially with *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie*. However, *Búsqueda* is the work that MacMillan has repeatedly cited as marking the breakdown of the former segregations he had established between his 'art' music, his involvement with folk music, and his interest in religion and politics. This music-theatre piece from 1988 has already been discussed to some extent in Chapter One, in the religio-political context of Liberation Theology. However it is worth reconsidering here in the musical context of polystylism, not least because it is MacMillan's first polystylistic work.

There are two works to which *Búsqueda* bears a striking resemblance, one of which was entirely deliberate, the other an extraordinary coincidence. While the main area of interest here lies in the former, the latter should be mentioned briefly, not only due to its resemblance but also to dispel any notion that one work was written in response to the other. As mentioned above, *Búsqueda* uses the ordinary of the Latin Mass as its structure, juxtaposing the texts of each section with poetry by the Mothers of the Disappeared. Similarly, Judith Weir's *Missa Del Cid* uses the text of the Latin Mass in the same way, and ironically laces each section (Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus and Benedictus, and Agnus Dei) with texts of violence, though her chosen texts relate to ancient rather than recent conflicts: the Christian Crusades. *Missa Del Cid* was even written in the same year as *Búsqueda*: 1988. However, it is not only unlikely but impossible that Weir's piece could have influenced MacMillan's. The latter indicates when it was written at the bottom of

the last page of the score: “Glasgow – Summer 1988”.⁴³ Weir’s *Missa Del Cid* was commissioned by BBC Television and first broadcast in November 1988.⁴⁴ The following month, *Búsqueda* was premiered in the Queen’s Hall, Edinburgh, with John Shedden as the speaker, and the ECAT Ensemble, conducted by MacMillan.⁴⁵ Moreover when asked about Weir’s ‘mass’ in 2009, MacMillan said he was unaware of it, despite admitting a great respect and admiration for Weir and her music.

The more established figure of Berio, however, was evidently of great interest to MacMillan at this time, and *Búsqueda* reveals this influence in numerous ways. MacMillan composed *Búsqueda* as a companion piece to Berio’s *Laborintus II*. Even before the music itself is addressed, it can clearly be seen that the unconventional scoring of each piece is almost identical. MacMillan employs a speaker, eight actors, three sopranos and an instrumental ensemble, just as in *Laborintus II*. The only difference lies in the use of electronic tape (MacMillan simply this) and the percussion requirements, though even here the differences are minimal:

	Laborintus II	Búsqueda
Percussion 1	Vibraphone Tam-tams (2) Spring coils Woodblocks “Traps” (Batteria Jazz) Guiro Grelots	Vibraphone Tam-tams (2) Spring coils (2) Woodblock Drum kit Sleighbells
Percussion 2	Tam-tam Claves Spring coils Woodblocks Maracas “Traps” (Batteria Jazz) Guiro Grelots	Tam-tam (large) Claves Spring coils (2) Woodblock Maracas Drum kit Sleighbells

Table 6.1 Percussion requirements for *Búsqueda* and *Laborintus II*

⁴³ MacMillan, *Búsqueda*: 85.

⁴⁴ Morgan, 1989: 15.

⁴⁵ MacMillan, *Búsqueda*: preface.

Violoncello (Vc.), Viola (Vc.), Contrabasso (Cb.)

(f) (rit)
(ten.)
(ten.)
(ten.)
mf

Coro

1 *f* *a nel mezzo* *p* but all the way in the dark wood

2 *a in una selva* *f* *ma questa bestia uccide* *p* in the bramble

3 *mf* *solleva selva* *f* *uccide* *p* *nel mezzo*

4 *ppp* *ed una lupa* *ppp* *con paura* *p* *the years of l'entre deux guerres*

5 *f* *a sopra* *ppp* *in the middle* *ppp* *una lupa*

6 *p* *ma* *f* *una lupa* *ppp* *nel mezzo*

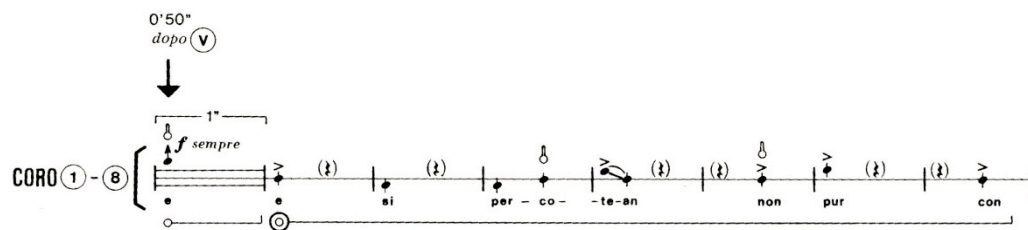
7 *ppp* *not only in the middle of the way*

8

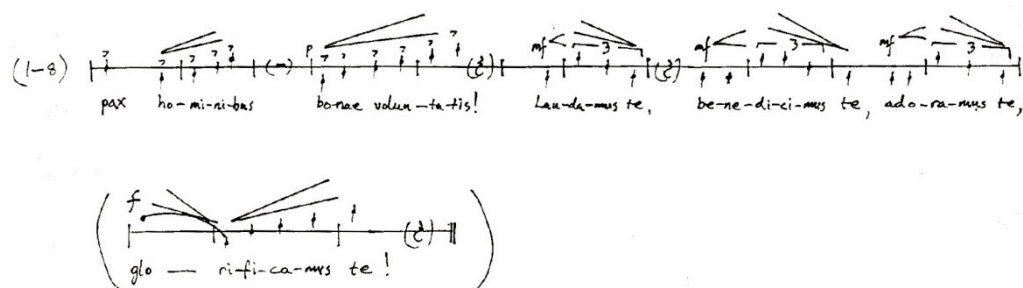
[illegible]

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The above example also shows the integration of the speaker (where the black arrow points). Unlike Weir's *Missa Del Cid*, where the speaker narrates before each movement, these works by Berio and MacMillan include the speaker throughout, sometimes in conjunction with the other sung or spoken voices, at other times with just instrumental accompaniment. MacMillan uses a similar indication to Berio to show that all eight actors should speak together:



Ex. 6.11 Berio: *Laborintus II*, (just after fig. 'V')



Ex. 6.12 MacMillan: *Búsqueda*, bb. 70-6

MacMillan also imitates some of the symbols employed by Berio, but not always necessarily to represent the same meaning. The above musical examples illustrate this, with both composers using a visually identical marking of note heads with a short, vertical line passing through them, rather like a vertical leger line. Berio uses this kind of notation from the very opening of *Laborintus II*, explaining in a key at the back of the score that these notes should be played or sung as short as possible. However, this is not the case for *Búsqueda*: not only is there no indication in the score as to what this symbol means, but the actors do not interpret the notation 'as short as possible' on the only recording

of the work, which the composer himself conducted.⁴⁶ Indeed quite the reverse effect is achieved on the recording, with the actors uttering drawn-out syllables rather than staccato punctuation.

Elsewhere however, Berio and MacMillan use common symbols with common meanings. One of these is the Celtic, folk-inspired ornament: a cluster of three or four grace-notes, which Berio indicates should be played “as fast as possible”. MacMillan’s Celtic, *pibroch*-inspired ‘turns’, which soon became an instantly identifiable characteristic of MacMillan’s work, are also played and sung as quickly as possible (See Ex. 2.3). MacMillan also imitates Berio by including several sections of improvisation: in the case of *Laborintus II*, this was in the style of 1960s Jazz⁴⁷; in *Búsqueda* it is in the style of rock music. The first instance of “Rock improvisation” in *Búsqueda* occurs at bar 192, but there are numerous other instances throughout the work.⁴⁸



Ex. 6.13 MacMillan: *Búsqueda*, bb. 190-2 (percussion parts only)

As well as the inclusion of very specific time durations in each piece (e.g. a rest that indicates fifteen seconds of silence), both composers use sections where the metre is treated liberally: Berio has a symbol for ‘indeterminate time relation’, whereas MacMillan includes an extended bar marked ‘senza misura’:

⁴⁶ MacMillan: *Búsqueda*; *Visitatio Sepulchri*. Catalyst 09026626692.

⁴⁷ This occurs at letter ‘V’ in the score.

⁴⁸ These are found in bars: 192, 200, 210, 212. It is also worth noting that there are markings that simply indicate “rock style” – i.e. without the indication to improvise, such as in the percussion parts in bars 196 and 197.

Ex. 6.14 MacMillan: *Búsqueda*, part of b. 251 (senza misura)

Both works also conclude in the same way, with incoherent whispering from the independent parts of the actors.

Given the significant position *Búsqueda* holds in MacMillan's oeuvre, the influence of Berio is considerable. Indeed, since *Búsqueda* was essentially the first work to sound like the MacMillan familiar to the majority of listeners, and that this work was greatly indebted to *Laborintus II*, one might venture to suggest that without Berio, MacMillan's musical development, and specifically the decompartmentalisation of elements he undertook in the mid-late 1980s, might never have occurred. Having asked MacMillan to what extent he thought Berio's interest in folksong and his integration of folk idioms into a contemporary musical language might have inspired him - or at least given him the confidence to do the same, the composer replied: "Berio's interest in folk music was a huge inspiration and encouragement to me. It felt like a green light, in fact, sometimes!"⁴⁹ It was this "green light" that saw the birth of MacMillan the retrospective modernist, and for that reason alone the importance of Berio to MacMillan's development cannot be overestimated.

⁴⁹ MacMillan, via email: 13.1.10.

While the relationship between *Búsqueda* and *Laborintus II* is clearly very close, other works by MacMillan contain Berioesque traits, though these are either tenuous connections or coincidental. When asked whether or not Berio's use of Neruda's writings in *Coro* acted as an influence on the first movement of *Songs of a Just War* (which uses the same very text by Neruda, and which is used prominently and recurrently in *Coro* - "Come see the blood in the streets"), MacMillan replied that he was aware that Berio had set the Neruda text in *Coro*, but didn't actually hear this piece until much later than 1984, when *Songs of a Just War* was composed.⁵⁰ Similarly, it is easy to make connections between Berio's relatively obscure *Opera* and MacMillan's two operas, *Inés de Castro* and *The Sacrifice*, for in each of these works there is a link between death and two, terrified children, as well and a sung, Agnus Dei lament in both *Opera* and *The Sacrifice*. MacMillan was unaware of this work, and admitted that he does not know it very well.⁵¹

However, despite these coincidental connections, there is another instance where an explicit reference to Berio is made. MacMillan says that he immersed himself in the modernists when he was younger (as a PhD student), mentioning Berio, as well as Boulez, as an influence in returning to the Piano Sonata and re-working it into a symphony: "Taking my lead from composers such as Boulez and Berio I have built this work on an earlier [Symphony No. 2], shorter piece – my Piano Sonata of 1985."⁵² With regard to Berio, it is clear that MacMillan is referring to such works as the transformation of *Sequenza II* (for harp) into *Chemins I*, and *Sequenza VI* (for viola) into *Chemins II*, which in turn engendered *Chemins IIb*, *Chemins IIc* and *Chemins III*. Berio himself called this musical 'commentary' – in these cases, self-commentary – and the parallel with MacMillan is more than evident (See Appendices F1 and F2). Although the example of Symphony No. 2

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² MacMillan, 1999: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Symphony-No-2/1007>>

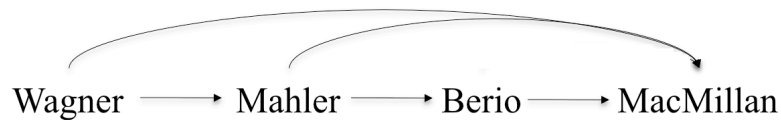
dates as late as 1999, MacMillan had clearly been influenced by Berio's example of experimenting with pre-existing musical material – both his own and that of earlier composers – since 1985, when he arranged the folk ballad of *The Tryst* into the Sanctus of the *St Anne's Mass*.

Inevitably, both composers' musical 'commentaries' (as defined by Berio) are not confined to their own works, and the most famous instance of Berio's musical commentaries concerns not his own music but that of Mahler, evident in the third movement of *Sinfonia*. The choice of Mahler was by no means arbitrary. Berio explained that one reason for choosing this composer in particular was as a tribute to Leonard Bernstein, to whom *Sinfonia* is dedicated.⁵³ However, the greatest attraction to Mahler in particular concerned the variety of musical styles presented together. He had long admired and studied Mahler's music, finding in its "vivid but ironic eclecticism a congenial example for his own work".⁵⁴

In addition to the evolutionary development of polystylism outlined at the beginning of this chapter, from Mahler to Maxwell Davies, an alternative model might be presented, comprising several of the composers discussed above. Wagner's profound musical and extramusical influence on MacMillan has been made apparent, especially *Tristan* but also *The Ring*; Mahler's tendency to self-quote to such a high degree and to use a recurring motif is found in much of MacMillan's music; and the eclecticism of Berio undoubtedly made a considerable impact upon *Búsqueda*, which in turn had an effect on many of MacMillan's subsequent works. Within this group of composers, an interconnectivity emerges, for Mahler adopted Wagner's 'Ewigkeit' motive as his own recurring motive; Berio prominently used the scherzo of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 ('Resurrection') as the basis for his most iconic polystylistic statement in the third movement of *Sinfonia*; and MacMillan used Berio's *Laborintus II* as a direct model for *Búsqueda*:

⁵³ Berio, 1985: 108.

⁵⁴ Osmond-Smith, 1985: 39.



Ex. 6.15 Wagner–Mahler–Berio–MacMillan interconnectivity model

Because of the breadth of its scope, many composers well known for their use of quotation in musical works cannot be discussed in this chapter, but several of them should be mentioned here because of their perceptions of time, which in some instances resemble Berio's perception of time. Such composers include Bernd Alois Zimmermann, whose serial language differs profoundly from the tonal-centredness of MacMillan's work, as do his quotations, which include classical models, as well as pop music and jazz. Zimmermann famously invented the metaphor of the 'sphericality of time', a space in which the past, present and future were all equidistant from the centre.⁵⁵ Developed from this concept was a term coined by another major polystylist, George Rochberg, who saw time as 'radial', exposing the delusion behind the modernist renunciation of the past and offering a vision of time in which all three periods are interconnected.⁵⁶ Berio also commented on interpretations of different states of time: "failure to understand the present has its roots in ignorance of the past, and it is useless to struggle to understand the past without an adequate knowledge of the present."⁵⁷ It is for this reason that to associate Berio with Boulez and Stockhausen, an association frequently made, requires some caution, for each composer's reaction to the past is different, and this has a fundamental impact upon the works they write. MacMillan's own view of the past resonates strongly with Berio's, claiming that Scotland's present-day troubles can only be reconciled by examining and accepting the social wounds of its past. As mentioned above, this relationship between past and present lies at the heart of retrospective

⁵⁵ Metzer, 2003: 111.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Berio, 2006: 71-72.

modernism, and unlike Boulez and Stockhausen, Berio and MacMillan consider this temporal dialectic to be not only healthy but necessary to the development of their music.

MacMillan and Schnittke: Bridging the gap between 'E' and 'U'

Like MacMillan, Schnittke greatly admired the polystylism of Berio, even to the extent that he provided an analysis of the Mahlerian third movement of *Sinfonia*.⁵⁸ Despite the early models of Mahler and Ives, it should be stressed that the term 'polystylism' was not used until much later in the twentieth century and was coined by Schnittke himself. It is for this reason, as well as the extremities to which he developed polystylism, that his name is most frequently associated with the term. This musical approach grew out of the composer's desire to combine completely disparate musical styles: "One of my life's goals is to overcome the gap between 'E' (*Ernstmusik* [sic], serious music) and 'U' (*Unterhaltung*, music for entertainment), even if I break my neck in doing so!"⁵⁹ The composer's aim was to eradicate the distinction between different musical styles – from both high and low art – following the example of Mahler and Ives, and Schnittke himself referred to these figures as models.⁶⁰ He argues that by breaking down these musical barriers, the artist simultaneously eradicates social

⁵⁸ He exposes the textual irony Berio achieves in his inclusion of both Mahler's scherzo, which recycles musical material from the song about St Anthony of Padua preaching to the fish, taken from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, and the music for the text "Hören Sie? Ja dort!" and "Jesus! Das war ein Ton!", exclaimed by the Captain and the Doctor as Wozzeck drowns at the end of Berg's opera.⁵⁸ Schnittke uses this connection to form a metaphor about the connecting thread of unity across the movement, which exist both above-water and underwater: "Swamped by the polystylistic quotations, the guiding thread (the *cantus firmus*) first "sinks underwater"... But then... the thread breaks... Now, the alien polystylistic musical material intrudes itself without being syntactically subordinate to the *cantus firmus*... a tangled mass of quotations rolls on freely, without any formal framework. The musical form suffers catastrophe." (Schnittke, 2002: 224).

⁵⁹ Schnittke, 2002: xiv.

⁶⁰ Schnittke, 2002: 45.

prejudices.⁶¹ This immediately recalls MacMillan's 'Scotland's Shame' speech, as well as his comments about the *Galloway Mass* and its various incarnations in other works, such as the clarinet concerto, *Ninian*, when he mentioned "a curious sense of fun about linking very different communities... making connections between people who would never normally have anything to do with each other."⁶² It also bears some resemblance to MacMillan's retrospective modernism: while Schnittke's main concern was to create a bridge between high and low art, MacMillan's retrospective modernism seeks to bridge the past and the present.

The popular-serious divide in music that so dominated Schnittke's musical thoughts was of great concern to Adorno. Adorno was scathing of 'light' or 'popular' music, describing it as illusory and mendacious, and claiming that "the promise of happiness, once the definition of art, can no longer be found except where the mask has been torn from the countenance of false happiness".⁶³ However, it is when Adorno considers these two seemingly opposite sonic worlds of 'high' and 'low' art that the implications for MacMillan's music become significant:

The unity of the two spheres of music is thus that of an unresolved contradiction. They do not hang together in such a way that the lower could serve as a sort of popular introduction to the higher, or the higher could renew its lost collective strength by borrowing from the lower.⁶⁴

Adorno maintains an absolute polarity between these two musical cultures. Such a model is antithetical to Schnittke's bridging of 'E and U', and to MacMillan's equivalent of 'palpable modernity'. This is a term the composer has used on numerous occasions throughout his career, and 'palpable modernity' is discussed as a topic in MacMillan's chapter 'God, Theology and Music' in *Creative Chords*.⁶⁵ MacMillan is conscious of a mid-way point between 'serious' modernist music and more accessible

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² MacMillan in Johnson and Sutton, 1997: 25.

⁶³ Adorno, 1978: 274.

⁶⁴ Adorno, 1978: 275.

⁶⁵ Astley, Hone and Savage, 2000: 3-19.

music. Although the composer may be aware of writing in this style, however, this is not to imply that accessibility for the listener was necessarily the primary impetus (or indeed an impetus at all) that provoked such a dramatic change in style from his pre-*Búsqueda* compositions. The composer himself is very wary of the term 'accessible', and prefers to think of an 'ideal listener':

What I mean by that is someone who is as equally attuned to the necessity for a deep listening, someone who is actively listening and *has* to be engaged by the music and does not turn off when a piece of music comes on. But in the world of classical music, you do get listeners who just turn off... I don't like this idea of classical music as the aural equivalent of a stiff gin and tonic at the end of a hard day at work.⁶⁶

In other words, the combination of art and folk music (as well as religion and politics) was not an attempt on MacMillan's part to 'reach out' to a broader audience but to embrace the various strands of his personality in a single artistic expression.

The same was true of Schnittke, who wrote sixty-six film scores in total, and his incorporation of filmic and other styles of music into his 'art music' was not an attempt to appeal to mass audience but to reflect these various aspects of his life. Schnittke expressed the essence of the hectic and dramatic twentieth century, pushing music out of its isolated environments by demolishing all artificial fences,⁶⁷ and MacMillan followed this example with the decompartmentalisation that occurred in *Búsqueda*. While Mahler and Ives may reasonably be regarded as the 'fathers' of polystylism, Schnittke and Berio were equally important in terms of MacMillan's acceptance and embracing of this approach because they were living composers, whose music encouraged the young MacMillan to explore further possibilities of polystylism.

It must be stressed that few – if any – of MacMillan's works exhibits the same extreme degree of polystylism as that typically found in the music of Schnittke. Indeed, it is only in certain instances that

⁶⁶ MacMillan, 2005: <<http://www.soundjunction.org/jamesmacmillanfacingtheaudience.aspa?NodeID=0>>

⁶⁷ Ivashkin in Schnittke, 2002: xiv.

MacMillan's polystylistic approach resembles Ives, whose sharp juxtapositions often pale in comparison to many works by Schnittke. Schnittke is nevertheless relevant to the present discussion, not only because he is the archetypal polystylist, but also because MacMillan has repeatedly expressed a particular fascination with his music, and a significant part of this attraction undoubtedly refers to the composers' shared religious faith. Although Ives held strong religious convictions and Maxwell Davies reveals an interest in religion through numerous works, one aspect that distinguishes Schnittke from the group of five polystylists explored here is his religious faith. Like MacMillan, Schnittke was a Catholic, having converted to the faith in 1982. This is surely one of the reasons Schnittke, together with other 'religious composers' from behind the Iron Curtain like Gubaidulina and Ustvolskaya, is a particular source of inspiration for MacMillan.

It is also worth noting that Schnittke is the only polystylist to be listed on MacMillan's second 'private passions' list in 2009 (See Appendix B). MacMillan cited the Epilogue from Schnittke's ballet *Peer Gynt* (1985/7) among his list of nine works. Although this is the conclusion of the ballet, it has also been extracted by the composer as a self-contained, twenty-five minute work for choir and orchestra (as in the context of the ballet). The piece seems to bear little relationship to MacMillan's style or any of his works until its conclusion is reached. In the last several minutes of the work, the choir – extremely distant, to the point of being almost inaudible – repeats the same phrases over and over, with the treatment of close dissonances between the voice parts creating a 'mushy' or 'hazy' effect such that it is difficult to discern individual voice parts. In addition, the texture of the choral parts is homophonic, adding to this distant aural backdrop. In the foreground is the relatively percussive timbre of a piano, playing single notes, each separated by a bar's rest. These gradually ascend in pitch, with the interval between each note becoming smaller, beginning with an octave (D-D), then a perfect fifth (D-A) then a perfect fourth (A-D), and so on, until the line continues rising by semitonal steps. This combination of a

prominent percussive instrument playing single notes, gradually rising and separated by silences, with an incoherent-sounding choral background is imitated very closely in the entry of the choir in MacMillan's cantata, *Quickening* (Exx. 6.16 and 6.17). Although visually these examples bear little resemblance to one another, the sonic effect is extremely similar, and having been asked whether this imitation of Schnittke's highly distinctive sound was conscious or not, MacMillan confirmed that it was.⁶⁸

The extramusical connection here is tenuous, and it is more likely that MacMillan was simply attracted to this distinctive sound. However, it might be noted that the subtitle of Schnittke's Epilogue from *Peer Gynt* is 'Out of the world', a reflection on Peer's acceptance and understanding of who he is, allowing him to finally be reconciled with his beloved Solveig beyond the world of humans and trolls. The reference to this work's conclusion near the beginning of MacMillan's cantata is therefore ironic, since *Quickening* is concerned with new life *coming into* the world.

Ex. 6.16 Schnittke: 'Epilog' aus *Peer Gynt*, fig. 66

⁶⁸ MacMillan, via email: 28.3.11.

Perc. 2 Steel Drums

CHORUS

BASS I
pp sotto voce, delicato (prayerfully, rapt)
 Abo-na in de shoo; der catta shesh mach; de

BASS II
pp sotto voce, delicato (prayerfully, rapt)
 Abo-na in de shoo; der catta shesh mach; dee failey mülkach; cheeth gang erotchah; geh

The entries in each section should be staggered, so that each individual voice takes a separate path through the words, chanting at different speeds, creating a cumulative but disparate effect. Each bracketed phrase can be dwelt upon and repeated any number of times before proceeding.
 ★ The notes in brackets are subsidiary tones to the primary pitch given at the beginning of each line. Each individual voice may incorporate these subsidiary tones, in their own way, to punctuate or shape the chant in a quasi-improvisational manner.

Ex. 6.17 MacMillan: *Quickenings*, Movement I, bb. 41-42 (choir and percussion parts only)

However, MacMillan's interest in Schnittke extends beyond the purely musical. Both composers have written specifically religious pieces⁶⁹, but both have also weaved unambiguous religious strands into primarily secular works. Two of the most apparent examples of this are MacMillan's first opera, *Inés de Castro* (1991-5), and Schnittke's *Seid nüchtern und wachet: 'Faust Cantata'* (1983). In addition to *Peer Gynt*, Schnittke was fascinated by the legendary figure of Faust. Many scholars have explored the literary connections between these central characters of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* and Goethe's *Faust*: Rolf Fjelde has noted that in both 1865 and 1866 Ibsen took out copies of *Faust* from the Scandinavian Club Library (in Rome), and claims that "*Faust's* influence on the gestation and shaping of *Peer Gynt* can hardly be

⁶⁹ For MacMillan this includes a plethora of motets and mass settings, as well as a passion setting – See Appendix A; for Schnittke this includes works such as the *Penitential Psalms* and *Three Sacred Hymns*.

overestimated.”⁷⁰ In addition, Patricia Merivale has called *Peer Gynt* ‘Ibsen’s *Faustiad*’⁷¹, while Northrop Frye has alluded to “the great panoramic masques of *Faust* and *Peer Gynt*”.⁷² Schnittke began work on his ballet of *Peer Gynt* just two years after he had written his *Faust Cantata*, though in an interview he stresses that Goethe’s Faust (to whom many writers have compared Ibsen’s Peer) was of little interest to him, and that it was the different, older Faust legend that originally inspired the cantata.⁷³ Schnittke had also read Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus* as a child, and it is to this version, rather than Goethe’s, that the *Faust Cantata* bears the greater resemblance, although it was actually based upon the *Volksbuch vom Doktor Faust*. Johann Spies published this in Frankfurt in 1587, but the folk stories probably date from even earlier periods.⁷⁴

Like the *Faust Cantata*, the narrative of MacMillan’s *Inés de Castro*, is based on a historical incident that supposedly occurred approximately two centuries before, at a time of tension between Spain and Portugal, when the Spanish mistress of the then Crown Prince of Portugal was murdered because she was considered a threat to the security of the state.⁷⁵ *Inés de Castro* was first dramatized by the sixteenth-century writer Antonio Ferreira (1528-69), but MacMillan’s libretto is derived from the eponymous play by Scottish playwright John Clifford. The greatest point of similarity between MacMillan’s opera and Schnittke’s cantata refers to their narrative, since each is a transparently disguised account of the Christian Passion.⁷⁶ Thus in both works the ancient narrative of the Passion is laced with a story which

⁷⁰ Fjelde in Ibsen, 1980: 234.

⁷¹ Merivale, 1983: 126.

⁷² Frye, 1973: 293.

⁷³ Schnittke, 2002: 29.

⁷⁴ Adamenko, 2007: 254.

⁷⁵ MacMillan, 1996: iii.

⁷⁶ In his liner notes to the 1989 BIS recording of the *Faust Cantata*, Schnittke stated that he wanted to write “a negative Passion... hence the reliance upon the Passion form with a narrator (tenor), Faust (bass), Mephisto (two-faced and two-voiced: hypocritically servile counter-tenor and triumphant deep female voice), and choir”. (Schnittke, quoted in Hedges, 2005: 151).

was put into written format in the sixteenth century but which had been circulated by oral tradition for several generations previously. Schnittke's polystylistic tendencies here encompass an array of musical and narrative styles, permeating the multifaceted character of the drama – a technique clearly evident in *Inés de Castro* also. Each work includes both polystylistic music and polystylistic narratives, revealing examples of literary retrospective modernism in their librettos: in Schnittke, the Christian Passion is married to the ancient Faust legend as modernised by Mann and modernised further by Schnittke himself; in MacMillan, the Christian Passion is married to Ferreira's sixteenth-century narrative as modernised by Clifford, who had written the play in 1990 (just one year before MacMillan began work on the opera).

Although based on the Passion narrative, a literal character-for-character interpretation cannot always be readily identified in *Inés de Castro*. Certain character parallels are apparent however, such as the ruling judge: in the case of the Passion, Pontius Pilate; in the case of the opera, The King. The connection here is made explicit in two scenes from the opera, the first of which occurs at the end of Act I, scene six, where the king is tested by Pacheco's demands that Inés be killed, just as the crowds demanded of Pilate Christ's death. The second, more explicit Pilate-reference is found in the final scene of Act I, where the king says "I've always wanted to be just. I wash my hands of this"⁷⁷, paraphrasing Pilate's words: "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it."⁷⁸

⁷⁷ MacMillan after Clifford, 1996: 21.

⁷⁸ Matthew 27: 24.

To emphasise the Passion theme further, the opera is punctuated with choruses, either on- or off- stage, singing the Stabat Mater⁷⁹ text. This is heard at various points throughout the opera, including the very opening (“Stabat Mater dolorosa juxta crucem lacrimosa...”) and at the opera’s conclusion (“Eia! Mater, fons amoris! By setting this text in particular, MacMillan emphasizes the maternal perspective of the passion from Jesus’ mother, Mary, and this corresponds with Inés’ own fate in having to witness the death of her two children.

While the dramatic element of *Inés de Castro* and the *Faust Cantata* contain apparent Passion references, the climax of the latter work, “Es geschah” (“It came to pass”), concerns not the Christian Passion but the feast of Pentecost, celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. This is described in Acts 2: 1-31: “When the day of Pentecost arrived, the twelve disciples were all together in a room upstairs. Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...”.⁸⁰

In Schnittke’s version however, this is transformed into a horrific event. The location of a room upstairs remains the same, with the disciples gathered together and a howling wind outside, but the conclusion could not be more different. The wind here is not the Holy Spirit but the devil, who has come to claim Faust’s soul. Schnittke uses explicit, horrific imagery, referring to a house full of snakes and serpents, as well as Faust’s gruesome end: “His brain was clinging to the wall, because the devil had flung him from one wall to the other. His eyes were also lying there and also a number of his teeth”. It is in this climactic movement that we witness one of Schnittke’s attempts to ‘bridge the gap between E and U’, employing electric guitars and a

⁷⁹ Stabat mater dolorosa (‘sorrowfully his mother stood’) is a poem used in the Roman liturgy as both a sequence and a hymn, depicting the sorrow of Mary, Mother of Jesus, at her son’s crucifixion.

⁸⁰ Acts 2: 1-4.

Tempo di tango

65

Alto Solo

p Es ges - chah ab - er

Piano

p 8^{va}

A. Solo

zwis - - chen - zwolf - - und - -

Pno.

(8)

MacMillan often imitates Schnittke's use of disturbing, graphic imagery in *Inés de Castro*, such as when Blanca, the spurned wife of Pedro, describes her inability to give birth to a healthy child:

In the penultimate scene of Act II, which comprises an extended soliloquy for the Executioner singing to the audience, the solitary character's detailed description of his role in torturing Pacheco (the King's right-hand man) was so graphic that it gave MacMillan nightmares.⁸¹

⁸¹ Weitzman, 1997: 31.

employs a grotesque, stately waltz to accompany Pedro, now insane with grief at the death of his mistress and both his children, as he crowns the corpse of Inés and kisses her. In ironic joy, he demands that all the people celebrate their king and queen and join in the feast, while the skeleton of Inés, dressed in a royal robe, looks down upon them from her throne:

Tempo di waltz

Pedro *ff* Feast! - All of you, feast! Feast! All - of

Violin I *f*

Violin II *f*

Ex. 6.19 MacMillan: *Inés de Castro*, bb. 1147-52 (Pedro and violin parts only)

Pedro's vain attempts to celebrate the coronation of Inés' five-year-old corpse once again have implications of the Christian Passion. The crowds who mocked the living Inés are strongly reminiscent of the crowds mocked Christ, who sarcastically hailed him as the King of the Jews and placed a crown of thorns upon his head. Here, the mentally unstable Pedro performs the coronation, and executes vengeance on her critics by demanding the respect they failed to show her when she was alive. This particular connection to the Christian Passion is emphasised further by the occurrence of this same, mock-triumphant, stately waltz in another work by MacMillan: the first movement of his passion-themed Cello Concerto, entitled 'The Mockery':

Tempo di Waltz (subito)
Maestoso
stately

Hn. 1 *ff*

Hn. 2

Ex. 6.20 MacMillan: *Cello Concerto*, Mvt. I 'The Mockery' bb.122-7 (horn parts only)

The connection between the narrative of the opera and that of the Christian Passion is therefore both musical and extramusical, and as with Schnittke's *Faust Cantata*, MacMillan's *Inés de Castro* employs both dramatic and musical polystylism.

It would be inappropriate to propose that *Inés de Castro* was written in response to the *Faust Cantata*. The relationship between the two works does not resemble that of *Búsqueda* and *Laborintus II*. Nevertheless, the similarities between Schnittke's cantata and MacMillan's first operatic venture are plural, and given the degree of admiration MacMillan holds for Schnittke and his music, it is not unreasonable to assume at least a subliminal connection. MacMillan's retrospection to this composer is demonstrated not only by each composer's desire to insert popular musical dances such as tangos and waltzes into 'serious' music, but also by their common preoccupation with the Christian Passion. Both composers find resonances between the violence of their respective narratives and the violence of Christ's crucifixion, and as a fellow, contemporary, polystylistic, Catholic composer, MacMillan found in Schnittke a figure with whom he shared many common traits. If Berio was the "green light" for MacMillan with regard to using folk music in compositions, Schnittke (and as well as Messiaen) undoubtedly gave great confidence to the young MacMillan in terms of expressing his faith in his works.

MacMillan and Maxwell Davies: History, Plainchant and Scottish Folk Music

The combination of the religious and the grotesque that dominates both the *Faust Cantata* and *Inés de Castro* is also frequently evident in the music of Peter Maxwell Davies. Just as Berio's *Laborintus II* had significant implications for *Búsqueda*, several pieces by Maxwell Davies reveal a direct influence upon MacMillan. On a personal level, the two composers are friends and have much in common. As well as both living in Scotland (Maxwell Davies moved to Hoy in the Orkney Islands in

1977), they have both been involved with the music festival founded by Maxwell Davies, the St Magnus Festival, where MacMillan taught the first composers' course with Maxwell Davies in 1989. He took over from Maxwell Davies as Composer/Conductor of the BBC Philharmonic in 2000, and in 2009 there was another musical festival, 'Notes from Scotland: Celebrating Maxwell Davies and MacMillan' (their fiftieth and seventy-fifth birthdays respectively), which took place in Edinburgh at Greyfriars Kirk & The National Museum of Scotland.

In a 2010 interview with Richard McGregor, MacMillan mentioned Maxwell Davies as a key influence:

I suppose to appraise someone like Maxwell Davies you've got to be aware of the multiplicity of personalities, and some people will like one and not another... I first heard Maxwell Davies' music when I was a schoolboy. I saw the *Eight Songs for a Mad King* on the television and I recorded it just by putting a tape cassette recorder up to it... I love the way he looked to the past and reinvigorated it by referring to it, quoting it, and so on.⁸²

This is one of the most significant and explicit statements MacMillan has made with reference to following another composer's example of quoting earlier musical works. More than any of the other polystylists discussed here, Maxwell Davies was his first and most enduring experience of polystylism. In addition, this composer is paramount in explaining the extent of MacMillan's self-quotation throughout his oeuvre. As has been demonstrated above with regard to works such as the *Galloway Mass* and *Ninian*, or the *St Anne's Mass* and *St John Passion*, to name just several examples where MacMillan self-quotes, the purpose is to bring together different communities. MacMillan cites Maxwell Davies as his source of inspiration for this approach, praising his older contemporary for engaging not just with audiences but with society in general, writing for amateur choirs and school orchestras.⁸³ In an earlier interview from 1999, MacMillan once again cites Maxwell Davies as a major influence, specifically mentioning *Missa super l'Homme Armé*, the First Symphony, and *Worldes Blis*, the latter of which

⁸² MacMillan, in McGregor, 2010: 92.

⁸³ Ibid.

he described as “one of the most important British works of the late 1960s.”⁸⁴

Worldes Blis (1969) is one of numerous pieces indicating Maxwell Davies’ fascination with the past. His works reveal a strong attraction to music of the Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque periods, and just as plainchant is integrated into a considerable number of works by MacMillan, so too does it feature in many works by Maxwell Davies. Two of his most explicit and famous references to history are *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, based on King George III and his organ which played eight tunes, and the opera *Taverner*, referring to the English Renaissance composer John Taverner. In *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, it is the music of Handel that is recalled from the past, namely “Comfort ye my people” from *Messiah*, irreverently set to a rag-time syncopated rhythm. Although MacMillan has said that the way in which Maxwell Davies reinvigorated past music appealed to him greatly, it should be stressed that the manner in which each composer presents the past differs considerably. The music of Bach and Victoria are evident in the *St John Passion*, but these are very much integrated into the new context, whereas Maxwell Davies takes Handel’s music and ‘dresses’ it in the style of a rag-time, thereby creating a stark stylistic juxtaposition. He distorts music of the past in order to reflect the madness of the central character. In *Taverner*, Maxwell Davies uses devices to recreate the original music of the time, in this case the Renaissance, imitating Monteverdian trills:

PRIEST *f* like a Monteverdi recit, but stuttering

He is a who(re) - o - o - o - o - o - o - o - ore - son cor - rup - tor of youth.

Fl., Cl.
Bsn., *pp sempre*
Str.,
soli

Ex. 6.21 Maxwell Davies: *Taverner*, Act I, scene 1, bb. 361-2

⁸⁴ MacMillan, 1999: <http://www.compositiontoday.com/articles/james_macmillan_interview.asp>

Again, this kind of historical recreation is scarce though not entirely absent from MacMillan's oeuvre, for the first movement from *...as others see us...* includes an example of this practice by not only quoting the melody of *Greensleeves* in the first movement, but scoring it for piccolo and clarinet, mimicking medieval recorders.⁸⁵ This is very reminiscent of Maxwell Davies' attempt to recreate Renaissance instrumentation in *Taverner*, using baroque oboes and a tabor:



Ex. 6.22 MacMillan: *...as others see us...*, Movement I, bb. 154-161 (piccolo and clarinet parts only)



Ex. 6.23 Maxwell Davies: *Taverner*, Act I, scene 4, bb. 479-82

However, an even stronger Maxwell Davies influence is to be found in another movement from this same work by MacMillan. In 1969 Maxwell Davies wrote *St Thomas Wake*, which juxtaposes highly contrasting styles. This orchestral piece is one of the most obvious examples of Maxwell Davies' polystylism, combining a suite of foxtrots (played by a 1920s-style dance band), a pavane by John Bull and Maxwell Davies'

⁸⁵ In this way, he also resembles Berg at the conclusion of the *Violin Concerto*, who quotes the chorale *Es ist genug*, and uses clarinets to imitate the sound of a reed organ when Bach's harmonisation of this chorale begins.

own, high-modernist music (the work's subtitle is: "Foxtrot for Orchestra on a Pavan by John Bull"). Like *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, MacMillan remembers seeing *St Thomas Wake* when it was broadcast on television, performed at the BBC Proms, and it clearly made an impression on him, for *...as others see us...* bears an unmistakable resemblance to Maxwell Davies' work. In the piece, MacMillan wrote musical portraits in response to seven visual portraits he saw in the National Portrait Gallery in London (See Appendix D). The penultimate movement refers to T.S. Eliot, and in his programme note to the work, MacMillan explains his approach to this figure:

I attempt to capture the split personality of this poet, seen in this cubist portrait by Patrick Heron. I took the two profiles to refer to his dual national characteristics - this American who was fascinated by England and especially by High Anglican ritual. Therefore his Englishness is captured by a quasi-liturgical music, and his American-ness is presented in a 1920s jazz style for which he was reputed to have a keen interest.⁸⁶

This movement is especially reminiscent of *St Thomas Wake* not only for its extreme juxtapositions of styles from Renaissance England and

Ex. 6.24 Maxwell Davies: *St Thomas Wake*, bb. 220-226

⁸⁶ MacMillan, 1997: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-as-others-see-us/1116>>

Ex. 6.25 MacMillan: *...as others see us...*, Movement V, bb. 34-38 (trumpet and string parts only)

1920s American Jazz, but also because MacMillan incorporates exactly the same dance, the Foxtrot, in his work. Hearing *St Thomas Wake* in close succession to this movement from *...as others see us...* reveals the undeniable potency of Maxwell Davies' influence on MacMillan (see Exx. 6.24 and 6.25).

In addition to these popular dance idioms, plainchant has been a fundamental inspiration throughout Maxwell Davies' career. While many composers have included plainchant in their compositions, MacMillan and Maxwell Davies have done so to a considerable degree. Of all MacMillan's musical quotations (except his self-quotations), plainchant is quoted the most, even more than Wagner. Similarly, Maxwell Davies has used plainchant so frequently that McGregor has

specifically explored its significance in his works, and the composer himself has often revealed the use of plainchant in his programme notes to various pieces, including *A Mirror of Whitening Light*:

The number eight governs the whole structure, and the sharp listener who knows his *Liber Usualis* will recognize emerging from the constant transformation process at key points eight-note summaries of the plainsongs, *Veni Sancte Spiritus* and *Sederunt Principes*, whose implied texts (if you want to play my game!) have some bearing on the implied alchemy involved.⁸⁷

Furthermore, he recalls that while he was a student of Petrassi in Rome (1957-8), several times a week he ascended the Aventine Hill to the Benedictine Monastery, "armed with the *Liber Usualis*" (the indispensable Catholic manual of plainsong melody), to hear Latin Mass sung at the Benedictine College and Church of Saint' Anselmo... where I heard a lot of chants sung".⁸⁸

However, McGregor remarks that although the Christian message of plainchant texts is not an issue for Maxwell Davies, the world of institutionalized religion simultaneously attracts and repels the composer, to the extent that he has often contrasted the transcendental nature of some religious ideas with the hypocrisy of human interpretation and religious practice.⁸⁹ Like MacMillan, Maxwell Davies has provoked audiences not only with his music but also with public talks. In a speech entitled 'Religion and Politics: A Creative Involvement', delivered at the Bleddfa Centre, Wales in November 2005, Maxwell Davies expressed his disgust with certain aspects of Christianity, including what he describes as "petty squabbling" over issues such as women priests, homosexuality, abortion and contraception, while humanity is "devastated and decimated by wars, famine and genocide", and "man-encouraged climate-change threatens future generations".⁹⁰ Elsewhere in this speech, however, he praises the Catholic Church for its attempts to preserve historical artefacts, mentioning Borromini's re-vamping of the decaying Basilica of San

⁸⁷ Maxwell Davies, quoted in Griffiths, 1982: 164.

⁸⁸ Maxwell Davies, 2002 <http://www.maxopus.com/work_detail.aspx?key=134>

⁸⁹ McGregor, 2009: 152.

⁹⁰ Maxwell Davies, 2005: <http://www.maxopus.com/resources_detail.aspx?key=29>

Giovanni in Laterano and the preservation of cultural resources thanks to various monasteries. He is also clearly impressed by and fascinated with the liturgy of the Catholic Mass, for with regard to his own mass settings, (both written for the Choir of Westminster Cathedral, like MacMillan's *Mass*), he remarked that he wanted to "give people an intense musical and spiritual experience, and if they get that from the setting, I'm very happy", but he also stresses that this is not a declaration of personal faith: "because I'm not a Catholic, I come to it from, as it were, the outside."⁹¹ This highlights an important point of distinction between Maxwell Davies and MacMillan: Maxwell Davies' religious works are fuelled by an interest in religion; MacMillan's are representations of his own Catholicism, as are the religious works of Schnittke.

Many of MacMillan's quotations are taken from plainchant, following the example of Maxwell Davies and Messiaen. Two examples of this can be seen in his trumpet concerto *Epiclesis* (1993, rev. 1998) and the choral work *...here in hiding...* (1993). As the composer himself admits in his notes for each work, both pieces explore common theological and musical territory, borrowing from the Latin plainchant, *Adoro te devote*.⁹²



Ex. 6.26 *Adoro te devote* plainchant

Both *Epiclesis* and *...here in hiding...* use this chant in its entirety, exploiting the two musical ideas of an ascending triadic figure and a descending scalic figure. In the former MacMillan subjects this ancient

⁹¹ Maxwell Davies, 2002: <http://www.maxopus.com/work_detail.aspx?key=134>

⁹² MacMillan, 1993: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-here-in-hiding/889>>

melody to the medieval practice of hocketing, splitting the notes of the melodic line between the two bowed vibraphones:

Vibraphone (with bow, motor on)

Perc. 1

mf
con Ped.

Vibraphone (with bow, motor on)

Perc. 3

mf
con Ped.

Ex. 6.27 MacMillan: *Epiclesis*, bb. 213-6 (percussion 1 and 3 parts only)

Having concluded the first movement with this bowed-vibraphone statement of the plainchant melody, MacMillan suddenly changes the mood of the music into the dance-like syncopation of the second (and final) movement. This triumphant opening also uses the plainchant, but now in a more idiosyncratic manner, alternating between major and minor tonalities for the ascending triadic figure (*a/a'*) but maintaining the major tonality of the original's descending scale (*b*):

ff

a

a'

b

Ex. 6.28 MacMillan: *Epiclesis*, bb. 231-235, (trumpet parts only)

...*here in hiding...*, on the other hand sets the melody in a 'purer' form, though as with Mahler's treatment of *Bruder Martin* in the First Symphony, MacMillan 'darkens' the melody by setting in a minor tonality (G minor):

mf Je - su, quem ve - la - tum nunc *mp* as - pi - cio, o - ro,
3 fi - at il - lud quod tam si - ti - o. Ut, te re - ve - la - ta
3 cer - rens fa - ci - e, vi - su sim be - a - tus tu - ae glo - ri - ae.

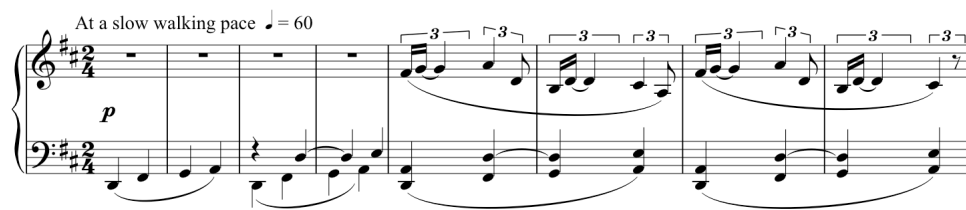
Ex. 6.29 MacMillan: *...here in hiding...*, bb. 10-26 (bass part only)

While this respect for the tradition of plainchant is without doubt a central concern for each composer, it is perhaps the frequent references to Scottish folk music that make the relationship between Maxwell Davies and MacMillan especially strong, and which distinguishes them from the other aforementioned polystylists. For example, Maxwell Davies wrote a series of Strathclyde concertos, the fourth and fifth of which include distinctly Scottish elements; similarly, MacMillan wrote a series of Scottish-inflected Strathclyde motets. Maxwell Davies' concertos are by no means isolated incidents of Scottish-sounding works, for a considerable proportion of his output includes this country's folk music.⁹³

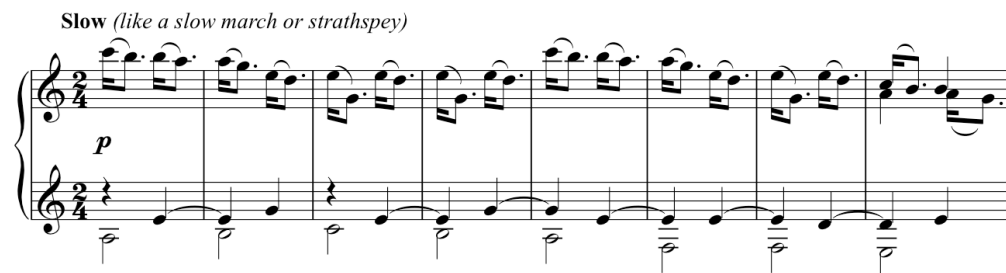
It is with regard to folk music that a further connection between the two composers is identified. Unlike Ives, who stopped writing works for choir and organ or popular marches, Maxwell Davies' polystylism includes not only multiple musical styles, but also many works which use just one of a vast array of styles, and MacMillan closely resembles Maxwell Davies in this respect. Both composers have written high modernist works, such as MacMillan's *Piano Sonata* and Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, yet both have also been inspired by Scottish folk music, writing polystylistic works that incorporate folk idioms, and also very accessible works written 'purely' in a folk style.

⁹³ Such works include: *A Spell for Green Corn: The MacDonald Dances*; *Carollisma*; *Kinloche his Fantassie*; *Seven Songs Home*; *Yesnaby Ground*; *The Two Fiddlers*; *Jimmack the Postie*; *Lullaby for Lucy*; *Renaissance Scottish Dances*; *A Reel for Seven Fishermen*; and perhaps most famously of all, not least because of its inclusion of a bagpiper at the end, *Orkney Wedding, with sunrise*.

Regarding the latter, perhaps the most obvious pair of works for comparison is Maxwell Davies' *Farewell to Stromness* and MacMillan's *For Ian*. Indeed, MacMillan even mentions Maxwell Davies in his programme note to *For Ian*: "Like some of Peter Maxwell Davies' reflective and unassuming piano works, this piece evokes a model from Scottish folk tradition and is structured in an elementary ABA form."⁹⁴ The prominent use of the 'scotch-snap' in both these works instantly evokes Scottish associations, and both of these miniatures express same sense of calm reflection upon the country's landscape.



Ex. 6.30 Maxwell Davies: *Farewell to Stromness*, bb. 1-8



Ex. 6.31 MacMillan: *For Ian*, bb. 1-8

Farewell to Stromness and *For Ian* represent the 'pure' folk music of Maxwell Davies and MacMillan respectively. In other works however, the composers combine these folk-like characteristics into a modernist language, yet their willingness to also write within a single style differs from the polystylism of Ives et al. This is what distinguishes 'stylistic pluralism' from polystylism. Polystylism implies the combination of starkly different musical styles, but stylistic pluralism is defined with reference to composers who write in a variety of styles, but employ just

⁹⁴ MacMillan, 2000: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-For-Ian/15191>>

one, single style in each piece. A stylistic pluralist is a composer who writes one piece in Style A, another piece in Style B and another in Style C; a polystylist writes music that uses a combination of styles A and B, or A and B and C, or B and C, etc. – all within a single piece. Polystylism and stylistic pluralism are therefore distinct from each other since, paradoxically, stylistic pluralism is actually monostylistic in terms of the music itself, to the extent that each work uses a single style (selected from a variety of styles). Only the composer is a stylistic pluralist, therefore, whereas polystylism can refer to both the composer and the music. These terms are also both distinct from ‘pluralist modernism’, which is discussed in detail in the following chapter, and which refers to a broader definition of the term ‘modernism’.

According to these definitions, Ives is a polystylist, but – excluding the ‘functional’ music of his youth – he is not a stylistic pluralist, preferring to fuse all the disparate elements together in his works. MacMillan and Maxwell Davies (and to a lesser extent Berio⁹⁵ and Schnittke⁹⁶) are both polystylists and stylistic pluralists. Describing his Second Violin Concerto, *Fiddler on the Shore*, Maxwell Davies reveals both his polystylist and stylistic pluralist tendencies, explaining both the folk elements in this polystylist concerto, but also his contributions to ‘pure’ folk ensembles, such as the ‘fiddle club’ on the island of Sanday, Orkney, for whom he has composed music folk-style music, especially dance music.⁹⁷ Similarly, MacMillan has written Scottish folk pastiches (most notably, *The Tryst*) but has also incorporated Scottish folk dances such as strathspeys and reels in many of his large-scale works,

⁹⁵ With Berio the definitions become complicated, since he orchestrated historical works in the style of the original composer, e.g. orchestrating Brahms’ First Clarinet Sonata in the style of Brahms. However, there are no original compositions by Berio which adopt a single style from a remote historical period.

⁹⁶ Although the majority of Schnittke’s most well-known works are unarguably polystylistic, there are exceptions to this, such as the *Suite in the Old Style*, which is an example of ‘pure’ Baroque pastiche; or the extensive contribution to cinematic music Schnittke made. The latter has only recently become commercially available through recordings by the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra under Frank Strobel, released on the Capriccio record label. At the time of writing, four volumes had been released between 2005 and 2009: C71041; C71061; C71127 and C5002.

⁹⁷ Maxwell Davies, 2009: <http://www.chesternovello.com/default.aspx?TabId=2432&State_3041=2&workId_3041=37451>

including: *Into the Ferment* (movement III); *Britannia*; Piano Concerto No. 2 (movement III); *Stomp (with Fate and Elvira)*; the chorus 'God, bless us all', from Act I, scene 4 in *The Sacrifice*; *Cumnock Fair*; *From Ayrshire* (movement II); and Violin Concerto (movements I and III).

What is common to MacMillan and all five of the polystylists with whom he is compared above is a sense of modernism infused with retrospection, looking back to past traditions. As Berio stated, the past cannot be avoided, and in the case of polystylism, not only is it not avoided, but it is actively embraced. However, this was/is by no means the case for all modernist composers, especially the European 'high modernists'. The concluding part of this thesis examines this complex tension between tradition and modernism.

Part IV. Conclusion:
MacMillan and Modernisms: High, Anti-, Post-, Pluralist and
Retrospective

The concept of the 'three traditions' proposed by MacMillan and which has been addressed in this thesis raises problems when we consider MacMillan himself as a modernist. The high modernism of Boulez, Stockhausen *et al* sits uneasily alongside issues of national identity, religion and the music of earlier composers, for there has always existed a tension between modernism and tradition. Yet despite his consistent promotion of various different traditions, expressed in speeches but even more so in his music, MacMillan firmly considers himself to be a modernist.

In the concluding part of this study I now turn to an examination of the extent to which 'modernist' is an appropriate term to describe MacMillan, by considering the composer's reaction to various types of modernism. The first section concerns the high modernism of Boulez, referred to in MacMillan's speech, 'Music and Modernity'; the second section considers John Tavener's reactionary approach to modernism, resulting in a type of antimodernism, and examines where MacMillan stands in relation to this; and the third section explores the many and diverse interpretations of postmodernism, perhaps the most difficult to define of all three of these terms. In the fourth and final section I make the case for two further categories: pluralist modernism and retrospective modernism. The relationship between these last categories and postmodernism may initially seem very strong, and certainly there are points of similarity. The following discussion argues that while any of the various different types of modernism listed above (including antimodernism) may be employed to describe certain works in MacMillan's oeuvre, the categorisation of 'retrospective modernist' offers the most comprehensive way of understanding the composer and his music.

High Modernism and Exclusivity: 'Music and Modernity'

Given the prominence of the concept of 'tradition' in MacMillan's attitude to composition, it is worth examining this term in isolation before considering it in the context of different types of modernism. In *Keywords* Raymond Williams seeks to define a number of fundamental terms relating to culture and society. His response to the term 'tradition' is scarcely more than a page long, yet contains much detail about the etymology and development of this word:

Tradition in its most general modern sense is a particularly difficult word. It came into English in C14 from *fw tradicion*, oF, *traditionem*, L, from *rw tradere*, L – to hand over or deliver. The Latin noun had the senses of (i) delivery, (ii) handing down knowledge, (iii) passing on a doctrine, (iv) surrender or betrayal. The general sense (i) was in English, from lC15 to mC17. But the main development was in senses (ii) and (iii). Wyclif wrote in c.1380: 'a positive lawe or a tradycion that thai han hem silfe made', which is an active sense, but there was a more passive sense in the characteristic mC15 'the trewe tradicion'. It is this range that remains important.¹

Williams appreciates the complexities of this term, and demonstrates the later, duty-bound association with tradition by including several Shakespearean examples: "Will you mocke at an ancient Tradition began upon an honourable respect" (*Henry V*, V, i); and "Throw away Respect, Tradition, Forme and Ceremonious Dutie..." (*Richard II*, III, ii).² Tradition has evolved through positive and negative interpretations, either as something valuable that has been entrusted to the present from the past; or as a shackle to history and that which has long been held to be 'respectable', even to the extent of preventing progress, as Williams notes:

Tradition survives in English as a description of a general process of handing down, but there is a very strong and often predominant sense of this entailing respect and duty. When we look at the detailed processes of any of these traditions, indeed when we realize that there are traditions (real plural, as distinct from the 'plural singular' present also in *values*...) and that only some of them or parts of them have been selected for our respect and duty, we can see how difficult Tradition really is, in an abstract or exhortatory or, as so often, ratifying use.³

¹ Williams, 1976: 268-9.

² Shakespeare, quoted in Williams, 1976: 269.

³ Williams, 1976: 269.

It is this 'handing down', from historical roots to the present, that so appeals to MacMillan, for he is specifically concerned about the integration of tradition into modernism. However, he claims that the reconciliation of tradition and modernism has been thwarted by some of the key European 'high' modernists, especially Boulez.

MacMillan's most explicit comments about this topic occur in his speech 'Music and Modernity'.⁴ In celebration of his fiftieth year (2009), the composer was invited back to Durham University to give a paper, where he delivered this speech – arguably his most provocative public statement since 'Scotland's Shame' a decade earlier. 'Music and Modernity' focuses on what the composer perceives to be an exclusive type of modernism, where tradition has no place. In the paper, he mentions the "laboratory" approach of the Young Turks, who deliberately avoided all aspects of musical communication that were primal, universal aspects of tradition: "They wanted to build a new culture, Khmer Rouge-like, out of the broken shards. This has been the mistake that modernists and Marxists in music and politics have made ever since".⁵

Although Boulez is the primary concern of the paper, MacMillan also lists Stockhausen and Berio as what he calls 'Marxist-modernists'. It is surprising and contradictory that MacMillan should include Berio in a list of composers wishing to break away from the past. Not only was Berio profoundly influential upon the young MacMillan with regard to the combination of an eclectic range of musical styles into a single piece (as demonstrated with *Búsqueda* and *Laborintus II*), but Berio's numerous transcriptions and orchestrations of past composers surely renders his inclusion in the above quotation void. In addition to completing Puccini's *Turandot*, Berio's transcriptions include works by composers spanning the history of Western music, such as Monteverdi, Purcell, Boccherini, Mozart, Bach, Schubert and Brahms, not to mention an international range of folksongs. It is also worth considering the

⁴ The full text of this speech was published in *Standpoint* magazine in November 2009: <<http://www.standpointmag.co.uk/node/2358/full>>

⁵ MacMillan, 2009: <<http://www.standpointmag.co.uk/node/2358/full>>

plethora of composers incorporated into the famous third movement of *Sinfonia*: Mahler, Bruckner, Debussy, Ravel, Hindemith, Strauss, Berg, Webern, Stravinsky, Stockhausen and Boulez.⁶ Furthermore, Berio himself, in the most explicit manner possible, declared opposition to such a historical detachment in an interview in 1985. Having been asked the question, “So in practice there is no such thing as the *degré zero de la musique*?”, the composer replied that there can be no *tabula rasa*, especially in music, and commented that the tendency to work with history reflects a need to organically continue a variety of musical experiences, and to incorporate different degrees of familiarity within musical developments.⁷

In contrast to this, in an interview from 1993, Boulez offers his own views on musical tradition. Discussing members of the Ensemble InterContemporain in response to the very first question of the interview, Boulez mentions that people are leaving and new musicians joining the group all the time, but there is nevertheless a sense of continuity. When it comes to expressing this sense of continuity verbally, Boulez is reluctant to even mention the word ‘tradition’: “In the ensemble, there is quite a turnover... but at the same time, there is a kind of ‘tradition’ – I don’t like this word, but there is a kind of ‘relay’ between the musicians who began and the musicians of today”.⁸ Yet this idea of a ‘relay’ is closely connected to tradition. In relay athletics, the runner carries a baton, and the baton is handed over from one runner to another. This image closely recalls Williams’ definition of ‘tradition’ mentioned above, especially its Latin origin, ‘tradere’ - the handing over of something from one to another.

MacMillan specifically targets Boulez in his speech not only because of the specific and exclusive type of modernism promoted by Boulez, but also because of the extent of musical power this composer

⁶ Osmond-Smith, 1985: 48. Although the third movement of *Sinfonia* is the most famous example of quotations from the past, it is by no means the only work in Berio’s output to make such references: consider, for example, the incorporation of famous historical musical excerpts in *Recital I (for Cathy)*, ranging from Monteverdi and Purcell, to Delibes and Rossini, to Mahler.

⁷ Berio, 1985: 66.

⁸ Boulez in Carvin & Cody, 1993: <<http://www.paristransatlantic.com/magazine/interviews/boulez.html>>

wields, and the implications this has upon contemporary composers within Europe and beyond:

Modernity in music has been subjected to a narrowing definition, dependent on certain places, times and powerful individuals... 'L'Eglise Boulezienne' has succeeded in peripheralising any aesthetic which did not conform to a central quasi-Marxist orthodoxy. Composers from the US and the UK have been casualties of this restricted view, which is now being challenged from a position of pluralism and imaginative strength.⁹

However, MacMillan's polemical speech is problematic, particularly because he frequently employs the term 'Marxism', which has so many varied and even oppositional meanings, to the apolitical figure of Boulez. It should be stressed that MacMillan does not label Boulez a Marxist in a literal sense. He might have referred to actual Marxist composers such as Nono or Andriessen if that were his purpose. He is by no means implying that Boulez actively seeks a fairer and more equally distributed economic system than that of capitalism, even though there are Boulez's own self-descriptions that link him with Marxism: in the 1960s, when he was connected with the group Tel Quel, Boulez frequently referred to himself as a "300% Marxist-Leninist".¹⁰ Instead, MacMillan likens Boulez's modernism to Marxism by exaggerating what he perceives to be a central characteristic of Marxism, and which he considers to be common in certain strands of European modernism: a severing from tradition, marked by the concept of a 'year zero', where history is expunged and time starts again from the present.

It was only with the establishment and rule of the Khmer Rouge under its dictator Pol Pot in 1975 that the actual term 'year zero' came into parlance, and thus the term was never used by Marx himself. Indeed, the term used by the Khmer Rouge was borrowed not from Marxism at all, but from the 'year one' of the Republican Calendar that resulted from the French Revolution. The revolutionaries attempted to replace the Gregorian calendar with a Republican calendar, based loosely on metric principles. They shifted the start of the year to 22nd

⁹ MacMillan, via email, 2.11.09.

¹⁰ Jameux, 1991: 158.

September, renamed the months, and replaced the birth of Jesus as the starting date of the era with the birth of the republic; traditional holidays were replaced by new national holidays celebrating events in the history of the Revolution and virtues deemed crucial for a republic; and the new calendar also abolished the observance of Sundays, as the seven-day week was replaced by a ten-day *décade*.¹¹

Nevertheless, MacMillan associates the 'year zero' concept with Marxism rather than the French Revolution, no doubt due to his Marxist-inspired youth. As Parts I and II of this thesis testify, the term 'year zero' has been employed by MacMillan to support his political and religious concerns for a variety of purposes and in varying contexts. In his 'Scotland's Shame' speech, Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge and 'year zero' are all mentioned in conjunction with Melville and Knox. When attacking the liberal liturgy that arose from the reforms of Vatican II, Marxism and 'year zero' are mentioned once again. At the age of fifty, when he gave his 'Music and Modernity' speech, not only were MacMillan's comments even more reactionary to Marxism, wishing to disassociate himself from the movement as strongly as possible, but his youthful involvement with it no doubt made him highly sensitized to Marxist characteristics, such that he could recognize similar traits in other movements, in this case 'high' musical modernism. These recurring references to Marxism, and specifically an interpretation of Marxism that encourages a severance from history, reveal MacMillan's method of 'exorcising the demons of his youth', a way of dealing with his own involvement with the Junior Communist League as a teenager. Even though the efforts of the French Revolution were far more dominated by a split from the past than Marxism, the latter has a far more immediate and personal resonance for MacMillan.

¹¹ Shusterman, 2010: 4.

Boulez as Conductor

Although Boulez may argue that notions of history and tradition in contemporary composition are detrimental to its development, this does not imply a complete rejection of the past, as is evident from his prominent career as a conductor. MacMillan admits this at the beginning of 'Music and Modernity', stating that Boulez is carefully selective, though not narrow, in the choice of composers whose music he performs and records, including Berlioz, Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, Bartók, Schoenberg, Messiaen, Wagner, Mahler and some major contemporary figures such as Berio and Ligeti.¹² It is worth stressing how much time and effort Boulez dedicated to Mahler. He has recorded every single major work by Mahler: every completed symphony, *Das Lied von der Erde*, the *Rückert Lieder*, *Kindertotenlieder* and *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* for Deutsche Grammophon, as well as the *Rückert Lieder* (again) and *Das Klagende Lied* for Sony Classical. He has also been recorded on DVD in a performance of the Second Symphony. Mahler's connection with MacMillan has already been discussed at length in relation to the topic of musical quotations or 'historical borrowings', as well as the practice of self-quotation. The reason why Mahler, of all composers, was chosen as a figure with whom to compare MacMillan was because of the extent of his musical borrowings, and the nature of these borrowings, from a range of musical cultures.

There is a degree of irony here, for Boulez the composer regards musical quotation as a practice that leads to a lack of individual style. He sees such quotations as historical monuments that are not only quoted but quoted out of context in contemporary musical works, which is completely illogical.¹³ On the other hand, Boulez the conductor has invested more time and care with works by Mahler, one of music's most famous exponents of musical borrowings, than with any other composer (except perhaps Wagner).

¹² MacMillan, 2009: <<http://www.standpointmag.co.uk/node/2358/full>>

¹³ Boulez in Carvin & Cody, 1993: <<http://www.paristransatlantic.com/magazine/interviews/boulez.html>>

By carefully selecting which composers he chooses to conduct, Boulez implies – perhaps inadvertently – a list of composers which inevitably and eventually lead to his own position in music history. To this extent, he is not so different from the many twentieth-century composers who quote from earlier music. Because of the modernist ethos he upholds so vehemently, Boulez does allow himself to engage in this practice, but he champions the work of many who do, and in doing so, he manages to share in their retrospection while maintaining a distance. It may therefore be argued that conducting the music of such composers is Boulez's response to the past. Whereas Ives, Schnittke, Berio *et al* invoke the musical past through composition, Boulez does so through the performance of various composers' music, many of whom have referred to historical musical models: Berg, Webern and Schoenberg all arranged composers of historical composers, from Bach and Handel, to waltzes by Johann Strauss, to Brahms, to Wagner, to Zemlinsky; Debussy notably quoted Wagner's *Tristan* several times; Mahler quoted Wagner's 'Ewigkeit motive' in numerous works, as demonstrated in Chapter Five of this thesis; Berio used the Scherzo of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 ('Resurrection'), as well as works by Ravel, Debussy, Berg, Stockhausen and other composers in *Sinfonia*; and Stravinsky famously stole music originally attributed to Pergolesi for *Pulcinella*.

Thus, Boulez' conducting of these composers and many others clearly testifies that he has a desire to make connections with past models, and has no desire to abolish all attachments to such composers. This polemical side of MacMillan's argument simply does not stand up to scrutiny, for all conductors are selective in their choice of repertoire, including MacMillan himself. Furthermore, by criticising Boulez the conductor, he directs attention away from the main focus of his speech: Boulez the composer.

Antimodernism and High Modernism

As a composer, Boulez's attitude to history differs from Boulez the conductor, for he considers the past to hinder the progress of the present, and it is this that concerns MacMillan the most. While MacMillan refers to Marxism to describe the high-modernism of Boulez, Boulez himself uses a similar comparison with reference to antimodernism, drawing a link between Stalinism and composers of "very simplistic styles":

Sometimes when I read some manifestos - not manifestos, but declarations - of composers who want very simple styles, and so on, I think of what we have gone through historically in 1947, 1948, when you had the Stalinists saying that people should be happy... This kind of simplistic view is completely contradictory to the human being! When you have composers behind you like Wagner or Mahler, just to take two examples, who did find solutions which are challenging to you, you cannot say that they did not exist or were too complex, so let's do something simple.¹⁴

In some respects, therefore, Boulez can be seen to acknowledge history and tradition to a greater extent than 'antimodernist' composers, and somewhat ironically, the above statement bears a striking resemblance to comments made by MacMillan himself in 2000. Discussing the music of Tavener, Pärt and Górecki, MacMillan draws a religious parallel in which to express the path these composers have chosen, and like Boulez, he comments of what is natural to being human:

I think the way I think about it is that they have deliberately turned their back on a particular tradition, thinking about it in spiritual terms, on the corporeal nature of man's humanity. I think they aim for post-struggle vision - it's a vision of the Resurrection... I have heard Tavener himself say that he feels very uncomfortable with the image of the crucified Christ which he sees as an image of defeat... I have come to terms with the fact that as a Catholic one cannot escape from this rather violent image in western Christianity. One has to deal with it, come to terms with it, and in coming to terms with it in music one has the violence of the crucifixion, the conflict and the unpalatable, before the resolution and liberation of the resurrection... but it needs to have that conflict gone through and fought through before it's reached.¹⁵

¹⁴ Carvin & Cody, 1993: <<http://www.paristransatlantic.com/magazine/interviews/boulez.html>>

¹⁵ MacMillan, 2000: 16.

It is interesting that MacMillan prefaces this answer by stressing that he finds this type of music very beautiful – “seductively so”, and that he would defend it passionately in a company of avant-garde-ists who disparage it as “playing to the gallery.”¹⁶ MacMillan seems to contradict himself here, but this is not necessarily the case: he defends Tavener on the grounds that he believes he is sincere in his musical expression and not simply craving popularity; however, his criticism of Tavener lies in a theological concern only for the transcendental. Writing in 2002 in relation to his music theatre work, *Parthenogenesis*, MacMillan defended himself by claiming that although the implications of the work’s scenario are discomfiting, there is a long tradition of Christian artists who feel the necessity to confront and embrace the disturbing central presence of the crucifixion, and by confronting the darkness of the tale, one takes the cross into the abyss and redeems it: “to retreat from the abyss and focus solely on the transcendent would be to conform with the post-Christian spiritual narcissism of our predominant capitalist culture”.¹⁷ In other words, MacMillan does not attack the aesthetic quality of Tavener’s music, rather, he criticizes Tavener’s transcendent-dominated theological approach, which subsequently manifests itself in a particular type of music.

This theological difference is expressed through a difference in musical language. While MacMillan considers himself to be part of the modern music scene, Tavener regards modernism with utter contempt, as something to be rejected at all costs. Discussing his *Akhmatova Requiem* of 1979, the composer revealed that what he particularly liked about the piece was how it demonstrated that what he had acquired from modernism was beginning to vanish.¹⁸ Tavener has mentioned his disappointment in himself for still using systems in works such as *Ikon of Light* and *Eis Thaaton* (“I still had not rid myself totally of modernism... I had to find a way in which to organize and articulate my

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ MacMillan, 2002: 37.

¹⁸ Tavener, 1999: 39.

music according to a different level of reality, beyond music itself"¹⁹), and makes it plain that his rejection of modernism is not merely a personal choice for stylistic reasons, but a stance against a power which he perceives to be destructive and threatening: "We live in a culture of ruins, of which I believe modernism, in all its diverse manifestations, plays the leading role".²⁰ One could argue that the tension between tradition and modernism is a false dichotomy, for modernism has become both a tradition in its own right but also, by its very presence in musical history, as part of a broader, evolving musical tradition. Tavener rejects this but accepts music preceding modernism, just as he rejects the crucifixion but accepts the resurrection.

It is easy to misinterpret MacMillan's attitude towards modernism from his 'Music and Modernity' speech, and to assume he shares Tavener's views. However, this is an erroneous assessment, for MacMillan does not oppose modernism itself – not even the esoteric nature of high modernism. Because of 'Music and Modernity', as well as his relatively accessible musical style (relative to high-modernism), it is tempting to think that MacMillan's high-modernist works date solely from his early period as a student at Durham University – i.e. the pre-*Búsqueda* works. While this early period did elicit a number of high-modernist works from the composer, after 1988 he did not abandon this style altogether. There are several major works that give testament to this, especially (though not exclusively) in his chamber music.

Fourteen Little Pictures (1997) is the composer's only piano trio to date. The somewhat enigmatic title refers to the Stations of the Cross: fourteen images found in churches of various Christian denominations, depicting Jesus' arrest, passion, crucifixion and entombment. The fact that few critics recognised this reference reflected the secular times in which the work was composed, but it was not MacMillan's aim to ridicule those who failed to make the connection, and when questioned about the meaning of the work at a conference, he replied, without sarcasm: "Well, for those who don't get the theological connection,

¹⁹ Tavener, 1999: 55.

²⁰ Tavener, 1999: 91.

perhaps they don't need to know about it".²¹ His intention with this work's title was rather to show that the relationship between the extra-musical stimulus for a work and the musical work itself is not always as literal as critics often assume. If the listener comprehends the connection with Christ's Passion, then he/she has appreciated the extra-musical reference; if not, the music should be organized to such an extent that it can be understood on purely musical grounds – a single-movement piano trio in fourteen sections.

The fourteen sections form a single, twenty-minute movement, whose dissonant nature is relentlessly maintained throughout. Several subtle clues reveal the connections to the Stations of the Cross. The same tempo marking (semiquaver = 40-80) is indicated for the third, seventh and ninth movements, and each of these movements corresponds to the third, seventh and ninth stations, depicting the first, second and third times Jesus fell under the weight of the cross respectively. In addition, the climax of the work in the eleventh movement, comprising all three instruments playing *fffff* throughout, clearly reflects (or is, at least, a response to) the eleventh station: the crucifixion itself, where Jesus is nailed to the cross.

Three years later MacMillan wrote Cello Sonata No. 2 (2000), followed by *In angustiis...I* and *In angustiis...II* in 2001. While the former includes some of MacMillan's most violent writing for the cello, and continues the consistently dissonant vein and single-movement form of *Fourteen Little Pictures*, the latter two pieces offer an extremely bleak, dark response to the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center in New York City, 2001, eschewing any hint of sentimental or evocative writing. *In angustiis...I* is for solo piano and is based on the ancient war-themed melody, *L'homme armée* (though this melody is scarcely recognisable), while *In angustiis...II* was written for an assortment of instruments (oboe, cello and voice) and is described by the composer as "like a melancholy reflection."²²

²¹ MacMillan, Wigmore Hall, 9.5.09.

²² MacMillan, 2001: <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-in-angustiis-II/26269>>

The following year MacMillan wrote arguably his most 'high-modernist' work to date, *A Deep but Dazzling Darkness* (2002). Scored for violin, ensemble (including two grand pianos tuned a quarter of a tone out from one another) and electronic tape, this is as stylistically remote from MacMillan's congregational music as possible. The nightmarish piece includes several terrifying moments, such as a group of men crying out an anguished "Aaagh!" on the electronic tape, as if being tormented. MacMillan also uses modernist notation in the work, such as wavy lines instead of note heads (indicating glissandi up and down at approximate pitches) and he makes prominent use of quarter-tones as well:

molto espressivo e dolente

5:6

Solo Vl. *ff* *poco* *pp* *ff*

♭ = 1/4-tone flat ♯ = 1/4-tone sharp
 ♭ = 1/4-tone flat ♯ = 1/4-tone sharp

Ex. 7.1 MacMillan: *A Deep but Dazzling Darkness*, bb. 55-57 (solo violin part only)

The most recent examples of what might reasonably be described as MacMillan's 'high-modernist' works both date from 2007, and in contrast to *A Deep but Dazzling Darkness*, the Horn Quintet and String Quartet No. 3 are two of the very few works in MacMillan's oeuvre to possess an abstract title, devoid of any extramusical source or narrative.²³

It is apparent therefore that MacMillan opposes not modernism (or high modernism) but a resistance to the past, which he identifies in certain types of high modernism. Although Boulez does, to some extent, argue for a cutting-off from the past in favour of the new, the same is true of Tavener's attitude towards much music of the twentieth century. Indeed, because of Boulez's active and prominent role as a conductor of composers dating back as far as Berlioz, it may be argued that Tavener's

²³ Taking into account all the works in his published oeuvre at the end of 2010, 167 out of the 178 works had an extramusical title (93.82%), while 11 works did not (6.18%).

complete rejection of modernism is even more revolutionary than Boulez's rejection of historical models in his compositions. Tavener does not wish to start from 'year zero', but he is selective with history, accepting ancient models and rejecting modern ones. In contrast, Boulez and other like-minded modernists reject the rhetorical musical gestures of the Western classical tradition in favour of entirely new approaches.

Postmodernism

The acceptance of traditional gestures and structures has often been described as 'postmodern' to distinguish it from the 'modern'. Any of the five polystylists compared with MacMillan in Chapter Six might, to some extent, be considered postmodernists. Because of the consistency and extremity of his multiple styles, this term has been used frequently with reference to Schnittke. Hermann Danuser argues that Schnittke in particular is able to emphasize the pathbreaking perspectives of a multiplicity of musical languages bound by tradition, and in doing so demonstrates a postmodernity which has broken with the focus on innovative material, inherent in the idea of modernism.²⁴ Boulez disagrees that a new style can come out of such musical borrowing from the past²⁵, but MacMillan, as well as many others, *has* developed his own style through the act of quoting from historical musical (and extra-musical) models in the vast majority of his works. MacMillan's hybridization of tradition and modernism - a combination employed by numerous twentieth-century composers, and not only polystylists - has led some writers to assign to him the label of 'postmodernist' as well, and perhaps justifiably so. Journalist Daniel Jaffé concluded an interview/article about MacMillan with the comment "MacMillan is likely to enjoy greater quantities of listeners than many another self-

²⁴ Danuser, 1997: 164.

²⁵ Carvin & Cody, 1993: <<http://www.paristransatlantic.com/magazine/interviews/boulez.html>>

respecting post-modernist"²⁶; and the editor of Barnes and Noble, Scott Paulin wrote of *A Scotch Bestiary*, "it's no surprise that this postmodern *Carnival of the Animals* dreams up a unique menagerie".²⁷ Academic writers have also used the term 'postmodern' to describe MacMillan, such as Tim Woods²⁸ and the historian Peter Borsay.²⁹

However, Ronald Weitzman considers such a categorisation of MacMillan to be inaccurate, calling the categorization of styles of contemporary composers "an arrogant commonplace, often resulting in silly contradictions", and supporting his point by mentioning that within a single week, MacMillan was classified in one newspaper as 'post-modernist' and elsewhere as a 'late expressionist' – neither of which, he argues, is true.³⁰ When discussing this topic with the composer in 2010, MacMillan seemed uneasy being described as a 'postmodernist'. In response to being asked how he defined this term and why he considered it an inappropriate label to describe himself, MacMillan explained that it has negative associations, and a 'lack of rigour and organization of ideas'.³¹

The concept of postmodernism was first used by the Spanish writer Federico De Onis in his *Antologia de la oesia Espanola e hispanoamericana*, 1934, to describe a reaction from within Modernism, and then by Arnold Toynbee in his *A Study of History*, written in 1938.³² There are two central concerns in the modernism/postmodernism debate: the fact that the term postmodernism has been tainted, with composers who wish to be considered part of the modernist scene but are not 'high' modernists feeling ostracized; and the fact that the definitions of postmodernism in particular are so multiple that the term can be employed in not only varying but utterly contradictory ways.

The first and most obvious problem when using the term 'postmodern' is to understand not what it is, but to what it is referring.

²⁶ <http://www.compositiontoday.com/articles/james_macmillan_interview.asp>

²⁷ <<http://music.barnesandnoble.com/James-Macmillan-A-Scotch-Bestiary-Piano-Concerto-No-2/Wayne-Marshall/e/95115137727>>

²⁸ Woods, 1999: 187.

²⁹ Borsay, 2000: 4.

³⁰ Weitzman, 1997: 29.

³¹ In conversation with the composer, 14.5.10.

³² Jencks, 1986: 3.

Several writers, including Timothy D. Taylor, have sought to interpret the dualistic definition of 'the postmodern' by referring to *postmodernism* and *postmodernity*, of which the former refers to a set of styles and aesthetic points of view, while the latter refers to a historic period in the arts.³³ One might therefore speak of Mahler as a postmodernist with regard to postmodernism, but not to postmodernity. The architect Charles Jencks expands this twofold approach by introducing a third category, where postmodernity refers not only to historic periods within the arts, but to historic periods in general. In what is arguably an overly-rigid chronological interpretation of postmodernity, Jencks defines it as the third of three, large-scale historical periods:

	Production	Society	Time	Orientation	Culture
PRE-MODERN 10,000 B.C.–1450	Neolithic Revolution Agriculture Handwork Dispersed	Tribal/Feudal Ruling class of Kings, Priests, and Military Peasants	Slow- changing Reversible	Local/City Agrarian	Aristocratic Integrated Style
MODERN 1450–1960	Industrial Revolution Factory Mass- production Centralized	Capitalist Owning class of Bourgeoisie Workers	Linear	Nationalist Rationali- sation of Business Exclusive	Bourgeois Mass-culture Reigning Styles
POST- MODERN 1960–	Information Revolution Office Segmented- production Decentralized	Global Para-class of Cognitariat Office Workers	Fast- changing Cyclical	World/Local Multinational Pluralist Eclectic Inclusive	Taste-cul- tures Many Genres

Table 7.1 Jencks: 'The Three Eras of Civilisation'³⁴

³³ Taylor, 2002: 93.

³⁴ Jencks, 1986: 47.

According to the definitions outlined in the table above, it is logical to call MacMillan, born in 1959, a postmodernist. Yet as soon as this term is applied, its definition once again becomes vague. The adjective 'postmodernist' can refer to either postmodernity *or* postmodernism, and therein lies one of the term's most fundamental problems. However, even if it were clear whether one were discussing postmodernism or postmodernity, the definitions of each of these terms would still be far from clear.

In 1997, MacMillan defined postmodernism in the following manner (although the composer refers to 'postmodernity' rather than 'postmodernism', it is clear that he is referring to a style rather than a historical period):

Postmodernity means many things and has lots of negative attributes in music, but some positive ones too. Postmodernity as a negative thing implies a robbing, a pillaging of musical history with no real moral intent or respect for tradition. But I think that when you talk about postmodernity in music in a positive way you take on board an openness to a wider spectrum of human experiences, a rejection of the narrowness that the avant-garde and a particular type of modernism seemed to give us.³⁵

It is not surprising that postmodernism has taken on negative associations. If we consider the writings of two of the most prominent contributors to this subject, Lyotard and Jameson, it is clear that both consider it with a degree of contempt in its inclusion of 'low' culture. Lyotard describes eclecticism as the degree zero of contemporary general culture, in which one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and 'retro' clothes in Hong Kong: "it is easy to find a public for eclectic works... the epoch is one of slackening".³⁶ It should be stressed that although Lyotard appears to be criticizing eclecticism itself here, it is very much popular culture that he is targeting. For example, in discussing the eclectic nature of the postmodern condition, he did not necessarily have to refer to popular culture at all: instead of reggae and McDonald's, he might just as readily referred to the

³⁵ MacMillan in Johnson and Sutton, 1997: 10.

³⁶ Lyotard, 1992: 145.

eclecticism of eating in an Italian restaurant, attending a German opera, and admiring a French mime all within the city of London. It is the incorporation of low culture into art that concerns Lyotard.

Jameson, who has discussed postmodernists' fascination with schlock and kitsch, takes a similar line to Lyotard. He argues that the base materials of this degraded artistic landscape are not simply quoted, as a Joyce or Mahler might have done, but are incorporated into their very substance of the artwork.³⁷ Jameson speaks of the effacement of the frontier between the modernist and the populist, but the extent to which this might be considered similar to the compartmental disintegration that led to MacMillan's musical language is questionable, not because of the manner in which he includes these references, often incorporating them into his language, but because these populist elements are not truly populist but folk-centred. This may seem like a trivial distinction, but both stylistically and aesthetically, the difference is acute. MacMillan's music is, for example, very different from his British contemporary, Mark-Anthony Turnage. Turnage has become famous for incorporating Jazz into his musical language, though more recently, this has extended to include 'R and B'. In *Hammered Out*, a piece commissioned by the BBC Proms in 2010, Turnage explicitly quoted a highly repetitive song by pop-singer Beyoncé Knowles, *Single Ladies*, though without giving any public or official credit to the singer. Indeed, soon after its premiere, a remixed version by James Russet, layering the original of the pop song on top of Turnage's piece, was uploaded onto the internet video site YouTube, exposing the explicit connection between the two.³⁸

In the same year, the composer completed his third opera, *Anna Nicole*. Turnage's choice of subject for this opera also reveals the postmodern concern of Jameson and Lyotard, focusing on the life of Playboy model Anna Nicole Smith, who famously married an oil tycoon billionaire sixty years her senior, before dying of a drug overdose at the age of thirty-nine. Although initially she became famous for the size of

³⁷ Jameson, 2000: 190.

³⁸ <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Ya5S-JLzZE>>

her breasts after she had silicone implants inserted, Smith was one of the very first celebrities who essentially became famous for being famous (recent successors include Paris Hilton). In its superficial subject matter, its crude libretto written by Richard Thomas³⁹, and its musical language, resembling a hybridization of opera and musical theatre, Turnage's opera perfectly fits into Jameson's and Lyotard's definition of postmodernism. Scruton also agrees with this definition, criticizing it for its superficiality and refusal to engage with current concerns: "Post-modernist irony is simply a more sophisticated way of avoiding the question of modern life - the question of what we are to affirm in it, and what deny".⁴⁰

However, although Lyotard and Jameson agree on some of the criteria defining postmodernism, they differ with regard to others, for while Lyotard claims that "the postmodern is undoubtedly a part of the modern"⁴¹, Jameson argues that in addition to eradicating the distinction between high and popular art forms, postmodernism is essentially reactionary, acting as a negation of modernism.⁴² Jencks claims that Jameson uses postmodernism as an umbrella term to cover all reactions to high modernism, stating that two of its most significant features are pastiche and schizophrenia.⁴³ Georgina Born agrees with Jameson, arguing that postmodernism's acceptance of popular culture automatically makes it antithetical to modernism.⁴⁴ However, MacMillan is unsatisfied with this assessment, preferring a broader conception of modernism:

On one hand I've turned away from the greyness and aridity of a certain type of modernism, but without ever turning my back on what I see as a very necessary serious-mindedness about composing and understanding one's position in history. But to say that you have a doubt about the validity and power of certain strands of modernism doesn't automatically make you postmodernist. There has to be another way of describing composers who have

³⁹ Thomas had been one of the two lyricists for the highly controversial musical theatre piece, *Jerry Springer: The Opera*, which caused significant controversy in Britain and America due to its irreverent treatment of Christian and Jewish themes.

⁴⁰ Scruton, 1997: 491.

⁴¹ Lyotard, 1992: 148.

⁴² Jameson, 1992: 164-5.

⁴³ Jencks, 1986: 34.

⁴⁴ Born, 1995: 46.

turned their backs on what must, in retrospect, seem a very narrow experience of modernism in the West.⁴⁵

Before exploring this significant topic of a broader, pluralist modernism, it is necessary to consider further why it might be inappropriate to call MacMillan a postmodernist. One of the reasons for this is that he does not have a fascination with the superficial, the crass and the crude. If we consider MacMillan's operatic contributions in comparison to some of his British contemporaries, this becomes apparent: Turnage's *Anna Nicole* is about a Playboy model; and Adès' first opera *Powder her Face* has become known almost exclusively for its fellatio scene, during which the singer in the lead role hums her aria. These stand in stark contrast both to the Spanish-Portuguese war of *Inés de Castro*, with its religious, aural backdrop of the Stabat Mater, and to *The Sacrifice*, again centring on warring tribes, with the hope of reconciliation.

However, another and more significant reason why MacMillan should not be described as a postmodernist concerns the composer's relationship to certain metanarratives. It was Lyotard who first came up with the concept of postmodernism defined as that which reveals incredulity towards metanarratives, and urban theorist David Harvey continued this line of thought, claiming postmodernism's rejection of metanarratives is an important factor that sets it apart from modernism.⁴⁶ A metanarrative might appropriately be defined as a long-standing, traditionally held view, and there are several prominent metanarratives that permeate the majority of MacMillan's output, which render the description of his music as 'postmodern' void. Three of these - relating to the three traditions explored in parts I-III of this study - are examined below: textual unity across an eclectic range of musical styles; historical references (to national tradition and musical models) in the context of irony; and religion.

⁴⁵ MacMillan in Johnson and Sutton, 1997: 11.

⁴⁶ Harvey, 1989: 8-9.

Kramer and Textual Unity

Jencks comments that because of Lyotard and a tendency to elide Deconstruction with the postmodern, the latter term has often kept its associations with what Hassan calls 'discontinuity, indeterminacy, imminence'.⁴⁷ One of the most significant contributions to the discussion of disunity and postmodernism is Jonathan D. Kramer's 'Beyond Unity: Toward an Understanding of Musical Postmodernism'.⁴⁸ As its title implies, this paper concerns the organisation of musical material in works and examines how this relates to the issue of postmodernism in music, specifically the idea of unity in music or a seemingly logical or coherent musical argument.

In defining exactly what is meant by musical 'unity' Kramer initially quotes Webern, who describes unity as "the establishment of the utmost relatedness between all component parts...in short, to show how one thing leads to another".⁴⁹ However, unity can also be achieved, paradoxically, even with the juxtaposition of component parts, as Schnittke has argued. He does not make the relationship between the seemingly disparate elements as clear as possible, but this does not necessarily result in disunity, since there may be an extramusical aspect common to each component which is not reflected in the music itself. Even if there is disunity, Kramer does not see this as problematic, arguing that we have merely been conditioned to think of disunity as a negative value; it is the absence of something we are told is an indispensable feature of good music.⁵⁰ Kramer mentions Morse Peckham's 1965 book, *Man's Rage for Chaos*, in which the author contemplates not only the rage for chaos but also the rage for order.⁵¹ However, he stresses that Peckham denies that the purpose of art is to provide order in a chaotic world; rather, the world is overly ordered.

When considering Kramer's comments regarding the disunity of postmodernism in relation to MacMillan, a number of factors must be

⁴⁷ Jencks, 1986: 6.

⁴⁸ Kramer, 1995: 11-33.

⁴⁹ Webern quoted in Kramer, 1995: 11.

⁵⁰ Kramer, 1995: 12.

⁵¹ Kramer, 1995: 17.

considered. First, it is important to state that labelling a composer or his/her music as 'modernist' or 'postmodernist' or 'neoconservative postmodernist' etc. is difficult, and sometimes a single work can possess characteristics of all these terms. Second, there arises a fundamental contradiction between MacMillan's response to unity and postmodernism's characteristic of disunity. Although he may draw upon an eclectic range of materials, both musical and extramusical, in the vast majority of MacMillan's works there is an explicitly clear sense of unity: concertos often follow the fast-slow-fast three-movement structure; themes heard at the beginning of a piece are echoed or even fully restated throughout and/or at its conclusion. There is often a presentation of disparate ideas that have been woven into a tapestry and whose relationship and unity are explained either within the music itself or in MacMillan's own preface to the piece. It is therefore very important to make the distinction between disparate elements within a unified piece, and a disunified piece.

However, while MacMillan maintains unity within his own compositional language, he strongly opposes the overly ordered nature of French modernism under Boulez, preferring the relatively healthy chaos of British music with its wide range of musical styles, from Adès to Birtwistle to Turnage to Weir to Dillon, etc. Katherine Hayles aptly reflects MacMillan's attitude toward Boulez when she wrote: "As chaos came to be seen as a liberating force, order became correspondingly inimical."⁵² In other words, while MacMillan promotes order in the organisation of the musical text, he praises Britain in particular for its stylistic freedom and plurality:

In many ways, the saving grace of this country's musical modernity is a disregard for rules, and an apathy towards imposed ideological posturing... It has been the case for some time now that British composers have flourished in an open, non-dogmatic environment which is the envy of the new generation of composers in other countries. We have pursued freer routes through the necessary balancing of tradition and modernity.⁵³

⁵² Hayles, 1990: 22.

⁵³ MacMillan: <<http://www.standpointmag.co.uk/node/2358/full>>

Despite MacMillan's clear preference for textual unity rather than disunity, he may still be termed a postmodernist. Unsatisfied with Lyotard's complete rejection of metanarratives in defining postmodernism, Kramer established a division between 'neoconservative postmodernism' and 'radical postmodernism', arguing that the former permits the metanarrative of organic textual unity, while the latter is centred on disunity and chaos. He admits that the dichotomy between the two postmodernisms is difficult to apply, and in music it can sometimes be hard to distinguish neoconservative postmodernism from what might better be called antimodernism – an extreme conservatism in which artists try to return to what is perceived to be a golden age before the birth of modernism.⁵⁴ This exposes the danger of attempting to split the term 'postmodern' into two distinct categories. Jencks defines postmodernism as the continuation of modernism and its transcendence,⁵⁵ but Kramer defines postmodernism following Jameson's model, such that neoconservative postmodernism, which does *not* reject the metanarrative of textual unity, can be confused with antimodernism. However, the antimodernism of composers such as Tavener stands in stark contrast to MacMillan's promotion of his fellow composers, conducting works by Cascken and Birtwistle, as well as modernists from earlier generations, such as Schnittke and Messiaen. Thus, if neoconservative postmodernism resembles antimodernism, which rejects modernism, such a description is inappropriate for MacMillan. Similarly, the composer's adherence to the metanarrative of textual unity in his works means he cannot possibly be called a radical postmodernist. His music includes tonality as well as extreme dissonances; tone rows and memorable melodies; it demonstrates textual unity, and although the range of music is often eclectic, it is organised rather than chaotic. Given Kramer's criteria, it is therefore neither neoconservative postmodernist, nor radical postmodernist.

⁵⁴ Kramer, 1995: 22.

⁵⁵ Jencks, 1986: 7.

Eco, Irony and Historical References

It would be erroneous to claim MacMillan's treatment of existing musical material was always sincere. Works explored above with reference to the 'Scotland's Shame' furore give testament to this. Quoting the melody of "We are the Billy Boys" in *A Scotch Bestiary* clearly assumes a dual meaning: it is a (Protestant) Rangers football chant, but its inclusion here, by a Catholic composer, represents the issue of sectarianism between Catholics and Protestants. The same is true of the various quotations in *Sinfonietta*, *Symphony No. 2* and *Britannia*, to name but a few. However, it must be stressed that many of MacMillan's other works use historical references in an entirely sincere rather than ironic manner, and in discussing his incorporation of Scottish folk style into his music, the composer said: "I think it would be almost impossible to use folk music in that kind of [ironic] way."⁵⁶

Irony is a term very much associated with postmodernism, not least because of Umberto Eco's concise but highly significant paper, 'Postmodernism, Irony, the Enjoyable'.⁵⁷ Postmodern irony must be understood carefully and correctly. Eco defines postmodernism by its intertextuality and by its relation to the past: "Whereas modernism wished but failed to abolish the past, postmodernism revisits it, at any historical time, with irony."⁵⁸ As the numerous examples above testify, not all – or even the majority – of musical modernists sought to abolish the past, and if this is interpreted as a defining criterion of modernism, then figures from Stravinsky and Schoenberg to Berio and Maxwell Davies could not be termed 'modernists'. But Eco does not consider postmodernism merely in relation to twentieth-century modernism, arguing that it is not a term to be defined chronologically (in contrast to Jencks' 'The Three Eras of Civilisation' model) but is an ideal category, a way of operating: "We could say that every period has its own postmodernism, just as every period would have its own mannerism..."

⁵⁶ In conversation with the composer, 11.2.11.

⁵⁷ Eco, 1992: 226-8.

⁵⁸ Brooker, 1992: 225.

The past conditions us, harries us, blackmails us”.⁵⁹ Because we are therefore conscious of the past, it can only be referred to ironically in art. The famous example Eco provides is that of the man who wishes to say to his beloved, “I love you madly”, but knowing that she knows (and that she knows that he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland, the man says, “As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly”.⁶⁰ In doing so, he still manages to convey his message, but has avoided false innocence, knowing that it is impossible to speak such words innocently.

This can also be applied to musical quotations, and if we accept Eco’s definition of postmodernism as something not chronologically-bound but as a way of operating, this might be identified even in Renaissance parody masses: by calling a mass setting ‘Missa super l’homme armé’, the composer declares from the outset to all other musicians that this mass is consciously based upon the old medieval song, *L’homme armé*. To this extent, any conscious quotation, made within any historical period, might be considered an example of postmodern irony, an irony that avoids false innocence through the admission of the conscious inclusion of the quoted material.

However, to talk of irony here can be problematic, for outside postmodernism, irony does not simply mean a consciousness of historical models. Moreover, the manner in which historical models are referred to might be ironic or sincere, even if, according to Eco, all such references are examples of postmodern irony. Irony is, after all, a rhetorical device. When Turnage quotes the song *The Laughing Policeman* in his opera *Greek*, the irony is evident: in order to emphasize the point he is making about the brute force of the police under the Thatcherite government of late 1980s Britain, Turnage ironically juxtaposes the visual violence of the policemen with a well-known, cheerful song about a friendly, laughing policeman. However, when MacMillan briefly but distinctly quotes a famous chorale melody from Bach’s *St Matthew Passion* in his *St John Passion*, there is no

⁵⁹ Eco, 1992: 226.

⁶⁰ Eco, 1992: 227.

juxtapositional irony. Indeed, this represents the antithesis of juxtapositional irony, for MacMillan is paying homage to Bach's contribution to the passion-oratorio genre in his own setting of the passion. The same is true of the reference to Victoria's *Responses for Tenebrae*, which also features in MacMillan's *St John Passion*. The explicit reference to Wagner's *Tristan* in the same work is, however, less obvious and therefore more ironic in the sense that it has a 'double coding'. To quote works relating to the passion in one's own passion is far from ironic, whereas to quote from the secular world of opera (music drama) is more ambiguous. As we have seen in Chapter Three, the inclusion of *Tristan* in this work is due to Scruton's interpretation of Wagner's seminal music drama in *Death-devoted Heart: Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's Tristan and Isolde*. In the context of the *St John Passion*, Wagner's *Tristan* adopts a new, theologically-inspired meaning, referring to the nature of love and self-sacrifice. Thus, while any conscious quotation may be interpreted as ironic, not every quotation necessarily includes the element of juxtaposition often associated with irony.

Jencks, Scruton and Religion

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the term 'modern' assumes notions of secularization antithetical to religious belief. This was especially true in nineteenth-century France, where 'modern' connoted a secular world that excluded belief in the supernatural, while 'Catholic' connoted a besieged religion that was competing with modern culture and thought.⁶¹ However, this tension between the modern and religious belief in post-war France became less divisive. The Catholic elite became dissatisfied with realist modes of representation, which left their world devoid of meaning and mystery, and saw modernity's tragic side as evinced by the trauma of the First World War.⁶² Consequently, they re-imagined the relationship between religion and

⁶¹ Benitez, 2010: 109.

⁶² Ibid.

culture so that faith and fact could be reconciled: they embraced modernity in order to supply meaning to the nihilistic world in which they lived.⁶³ The ultimate musical expression of this reconciliation lies in Messiaen, and this is surely one of the reasons why MacMillan holds this composer in such high regard. Messiaen, one of the most significant twentieth-century modernist composers and the teacher of both Boulez and Stockhausen, sought no break from the past at all. Indeed, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, his promotion of plainchant *exclusively* as the only music appropriate for Catholic liturgies reveals arguably an even more rigid sense of tradition than MacMillan.

If postmodernism is, as Jencks suggests, a hybrid of modernism and its transcendence, then to include the anti-modernist Tavener within postmodern discussion seems contradictory. Yet Borsay groups Tavener, Pärt and MacMillan altogether as musical postmodernists not only because of their self-conscious quotations from ‘masterworks’ of the past but also because they are all religiously committed composers.⁶⁴ Borsay sees no conflict between religion and postmodernism, but his interpretation of the latter stands in stark contrast to Scruton’s definition, which argues that postmodernism and religion are irreconcilable, polar opposites: “A postmodern world is not merely democratic; it is essentially irreligious, since that is what ‘life in the present moment’ requires. It has become deaf to the voice of absent generations, and lives in the thin time-slice of the now...”⁶⁵ As mentioned above, Lyotard contended that metanarratives, of which religion is one, have become incredible, hence the secularism that accompanies postmodernism. If one accepts this assessment, as well as Scruton’s comments, there can be no such person as a ‘religious postmodernist’, even though Borsay claims otherwise. Religion, unless referred to ironically, is antithetical to postmodernism.

If we accept that postmodernism is intrinsically irreligious, in which case MacMillan could not be termed a postmodernist, it is also

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Borsay, 2000: 4.

⁶⁵ Scruton, 1997: 505-6.

worth considering the extent to which modernism might offer scope for religion. Somewhat inevitably perhaps, we return to the figure of Messiaen. About this composer's relationship between modernism and religious faith, MacMillan stated:

And for that matter if it wasn't through a discovery of Messiaen's theology I wouldn't have realised just how widespread a sense of concern there is for the sacred in modern music – a concern for rediscovering a sense of the sacred that you find right throughout the twentieth century from a whole host of different composers.⁶⁶

Messiaen's music inspired MacMillan both musically and theologically, because through Messiaen it became apparent that "here was one of the truly special musical individualists of the twentieth century, who wasn't embarrassed at all about making clear what the theological starting points were".⁶⁷

Even if one were to completely ignore these religious concerns, there remains the fundamental tension between modernism and the past, defining modernism not simply as progressive, but also anti-historical. MacMillan does not perceive it in this way, and nor did Messiaen, but Scruton does:

...Adorno and Schoenberg argued that tonality is no longer available, and that all of music must be derived anew, from some other grammar. However, the failure of serial atonality to attract an audience has caused both composers and critics to be suspicious of the modernist project - not just of the avant-gardism of its main proponents, but of the very idea of an art that self-consciously situates itself in the present and the future, and seeks to rid itself of the past.⁶⁸

This assessment is completely inaccurate with regard to many modernist composers. Figures such as Ives, Maxwell Davies and Schnittke did not seek to rid themselves of the past at all, and to mention Schoenberg of all composers as desiring a historical eradication is simply wrong. It is well known that Schoenberg himself emphasized the fact that his music was "derived through and through from the traditions of German music".⁶⁹ There is absolutely no sense of revolution here, merely progress through an evolving tradition.

⁶⁶ MacMillan in McGregor, 2010: 71.

⁶⁷ MacMillan in McGregor, 2010: 70.

⁶⁸ Scruton, 1997: 490.

⁶⁹ Schoenberg, 1975: 173.

Given its incredulity towards metanarratives such as religion, it may reasonably be argued that postmodernism has cut itself off from the past to a greater degree than modernism. It has been made abundantly clear that many modernists, from Stravinsky to Adès, have not sought to sever links with the past at all. Postmodernism, on the other hand, presents superficial links with multiple styles, but approaches these *objets trouvés* without sincerity. Although his assessment of modernism and Schoenberg may be highly suspect, Scruton is more convincing in his criticism of the distance at which postmodernists place historical objects, and provides a useful analogy: “What exactly do the ‘postmodernist’ inverted commas mean? When a composer uses them, is he exemplifying a renewed attachment to tonality, or, on the contrary, distancing himself from tonality, like one who picks it up with rubber gloves?”⁷⁰

The answer to this question depends on the interpretation of postmodernism one adopts. However, this problem might be circumvented if we simply refuse to use the term. Given that it has now been made abundantly clear that many of the plural strands of modernism actually make no attempt to cut off from the past, and that postmodernism’s engagement with the past is vague and subject to a range of interpretations, it is clearly more appropriate to consider MacMillan as a modernist. Far from distancing himself from the past, the composer’s music unashamedly exhibits a continuation of that which has already been written. Yet because of other strands of modernism, specifically ‘high modernism’, which do indeed make attempts to begin from a ‘degree zero’, to simply call MacMillan a modernist is misleading, since this term by no means implies the retrospection inherent in MacMillan’s compositional approach. For this reason, he must be termed a particular type of modernist: a retrospective modernist.

⁷⁰ Scruton, 1997: 490.

Pluralistic and Retrospective Modernism

Habermas famously described modernity as “an unfinished project” in 1980, categorizing three “conservative” movements in relation to modernism as the premodernism of the Young Conservatives, the antimodernism of the Old Conservatives, and the postmodernism of the New Conservatives.⁷¹ However, theorists in the first decade of the twenty-first century have critically and significantly reassessed the division between modernism and postmodernism. Marjorie Perloff claims that “as we move into the twenty first century, the modern-postmodern divide has emerged as more apparent than real”.⁷² In his conclusion to *Musical Modernism at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*, David Metzger draws upon several major theorists concerning the issue of modernism in relation to postmodernism, and several of these, namely Habermas, Wellmer and Belting, are of particular importance in defining MacMillan as a modernist. Instead of accepting positions such as pluralism, anti-utopianism and irony as characteristics of the separate movement of postmodernism, Wellmer considers these as aspects of an internal critique that broadens the boundaries of modernism.⁷³

As Metzger notes, Wellmer’s notion of an internal critique reverses Jencks’ concept, with modernist works absorbing and transcending the aesthetic stances associated with postmodernism, and thereby expanding the field of modernism.⁷⁴ Metzger himself, however, looks beyond the either/or mind-set of Jencks and Wellmer, with pluralism as his central concept for modernism:

Pluralism, modernism and postmodernism form a critical trinity, so closely have they been connected to each other in the discussion of contemporary arts. The three have been arranged in different ways, depending on the view being proposed. The most common combination is the tight connection, almost overlap, between pluralism and postmodernism... The third part of the trinity, modernism, is placed at a distance, consigned to the fading past. This study presents another configuration. There is no overlap between pluralism and postmodernism or between

⁷¹ Habermas, 1997: 53.

⁷² Perloff, 2002: 164.

⁷³ Wellmer, 88-9.

⁷⁴ Metzger, 2009: 243.

pluralism and modernism for that matter. The broader artistic field is considered to be pluralistic, not the exclusive terrain of either one of the *isms*.⁷⁵

It is this account of modernism and postmodernism that concurs most strongly with MacMillan's definition of modernism. MacMillan considers himself to be part of a new music culture, but does not feel restricted to a predetermined plan: "The music that I make can freely make references to the past, to other cultures, to modernity, to tonality, and so on".⁷⁶

MacMillan's promotion of pluralist modernism is indisputable. In 'Music and Modernity', he attempts to fuse plurality with modernism, such that modernism becomes an umbrella term for various different musical styles existing today. He repeatedly argues the case for a "plurality of aesthetics and styles", which he finds in the Anglosphere (America, Canada and Australia), but not in Europe.⁷⁷ MacMillan is frustrated by the fact that if a composer includes historical references, either musical or extramusical, he is automatically branded as a postmodernist, whereas if a composer uses an arcane musical language, he is immediately a member of the modernist elite, no matter how regressive the music may actually be. What MacMillan seeks is a genuine acceptance and celebration of plural music styles. In effect, he seeks to expunge the distinction between modernism and modernity outlined by Habermas and Wellmer in the introduction to this thesis, where artistic modernism is just one strand of a larger cultural modernity.

The alternative model MacMillan and Metzer present is an inclusive, plural modernity, which embraces the high modernism of Birtwistle as much as the modernism of MacMillan and other composers who do not reject systems such as tonality or forms such as sonatas, symphonies or concertos. To this extent, it is reasonable to assign the label of 'pluralist modernist' to MacMillan, and in many ways

⁷⁵ Metzer, 2009: 243-4.

⁷⁶ MacMillan in Whittle, 2009: 31.

⁷⁷ MacMillan, 2009: <<http://www.standpointmag.co.uk/node/2358/full>>

this offers an accurate description of the composer – both his personality as a composer, and his music itself.

However, ‘pluralist modernist’ fails to encapsulate the emphasis MacMillan places upon tradition. This becomes most clearly apparent when we consider once again one of MacMillan’s younger British contemporaries, Thomas Adès. Although I have described some of Adès’ works as ‘postmodern’ above, this does not apply to the composer’s entire output. For Adès, allusions to other musical styles and composers from musical history are in no way a deliberate reaction against the ‘tabula rasa/year zero’ approach of some of the high-modernists. Unlike MacMillan, the tension between tradition and modernism is simply irrelevant for Adès. He merely refers to the music he enjoys, which may be a British pop song from the 1980s or a harpsichord piece by Couperin. Indeed, it might be argued that Adès’ musical allusions reveal a sense of timelessness, inasmuch as he divorces the music from its historical or other extramusical context and approaches it on purely musical grounds. Born in an age of technological advancements (1971), when a considerable amount of music became accessible with ease, Adès interprets disparate musical styles from the past not in historical terms but as part of his contemporary musical landscape. He argues that it is not merely a pluralistic that world that we live in, but also one where times and eras no longer have to be put in a particular order, and that thanks to modern technology we live closer to the extreme past than we ever have before, since we can hear music from any period at the press of a mouse.⁷⁸ These musical works and styles, Adès argues, are actually not the past but our modern environment: “Anything you want can be your environment, so with that in mind, one can use any model and still be in the present”.⁷⁹ The composer sees no distinction between past and present, absorbing plural styles from history into his own musical language quite naturally and unselfconsciously.

⁷⁸ Adès in interview with Andrew Ford in ‘The Music Show’, *ABC Radio National*, 9.10.10.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

MacMillan's approach exhibits many common features with Adès' pluralism, but maintains the distinction between past and present, and interprets this as a healthy dialectic:

Intellectually, tradition has flowed through the 20th and 21st centuries in a way that perhaps the more hard-line modernists tried to resist... You can't stop tradition. Tradition will always make its impact in one way or another, and the great error of modernism has been that conceit that they tried to avoid tradition.⁸⁰

It is tradition that infuses every aspect of MacMillan's character, and this is why his approach must be described as retrospective – looking back to past traditions. With regard to Scotland's history, this refers to the pre-Reformation period. With regard to religion, it refers to the reinstatement of the Tridentine rite and the promotion of Renaissance sacred music and plainchant. With regard to music, it refers to historical musical models, techniques and composers. Yet MacMillan does not romanticize the past, nor is he nostalgic. Each of these aspects – the cultural/political, the religious and the purely musical – reveals the composer's desire to improve the present through its relationship to the past: to heal sectarianism in present-day Scotland; to offer a more numinous quality to liturgical practices in the twenty-first century; to write contemporary music that is original but which willingly and even explicitly acknowledges its musical ancestors. His aim is to acknowledge both modernism and tradition, and to this extent he should be termed a 'retrospective modernist'.

In addition to ancient traditions, MacMillan has also established his own, immanent tradition. Appendix F1 represents the musical world MacMillan has set up for himself to move within. He is not confined to this musical world, as his quotations of other composers' music makes clear, but it is nevertheless a construction in which he operates, reflects, and communicates with his younger self. It is through this extraordinary interconnectivity that a sense of coherence is 'threaded' throughout MacMillan's oeuvre, allowing him to compose pieces of such contrasting styles, and in several instances, these 'threads' are unconsciously woven. In the vast majority of cases however, they are

⁸⁰ Hallam, 2008: 18.

unmistakably deliberate, allowing the most simple, diatonic congregational mass setting to sit alongside high modernist works such as Piano Sonata with little sense of tension.

As mentioned above in conjunction with Maxwell Davies, MacMillan is a polystylist and a stylistic pluralist, who promotes a pluralist attitude towards modernism not only in his speeches but also (and even more explicitly) in his music. Fundamental to this pluralistic approach is tradition, and it is arguably the composer's Catholic faith that has been the greatest influence in developing this attitude, a faith in a tradition lasting more than two millennia. While his political attitudes have changed considerably since his youth, MacMillan's Catholicism has remained a strong constant throughout his compositional career. The political dimension has been phased out of his music since the late 1990s, but his socialist concerns still find a voice in his music, specifically in the congregational pieces he writes for his local parish church.

Despite the significance of tradition, MacMillan is by no means an antimodernist. He does not reject the developments of the avant-garde throughout the twentieth century, as his high modernist works testify, dating not only from his student days but also throughout his career, and evident in works as recent as 2007. Yet it would be inaccurate to simply call him a high modernist, to be considered alongside Boulez and Stockhausen, not least because he refers to past models so frequently. However, although this practice of historical referencing is a characteristic of postmodernism, he is not a postmodernist either, since his sincerity in using these musical quotations (rather than in an ironic manner) does not cohere with many definitions of postmodernism, nor does the textual unity of his works, nor does his religious faith. He is a pluralist modernist, but is especially concerned with the relationship between the past and present, and does not see the past as simply a part of the present. The past is the past, but it is something to be engaged with, not rejected.

To this extent, I propose that the most plausible term to describe MacMillan is as a 'retrospective modernist'. He adopts a Janus-like

perspective by celebrating what he perceives to be a creative tension between the historical and the contemporary. It is this tension that has inspired such a substantial and varied body of work between 1982 and 2010, and this same tension will no doubt continue to inspire and challenge the composer for years to come. Traditions infuse his music, and MacMillan's own musical tradition (Appendix F1) accommodates the tension between tradition and modernism through an interconnectivity of shared musical material. It is through this accommodation that MacMillan presents a seemingly disparate yet ultimately coherent output across some thirty years. As the composer himself succinctly puts it: "I'm aware of a continuum in progress, where everything I've done so far is informing or shaping the next stage of development".⁸¹

⁸¹ MacMillan in McGregor, 2010: 93.

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- _____. 1994. *Britannia*. London: Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.
- _____. 1994. *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*. London: Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. HPS 1238.
- _____. 1992. *...as others see us...* London: Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd.
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Appendix A: List of MacMillan's Works, 1977-2010

Key

*Discarded/Unpublished: 10

+Part of the series of *Strathclyde Motets*

#Works not considered in this study – neither seen nor heard by the author.⁸²

Including ten unpublished works:

Total number of works: **188**

Number of works examined: **147**

Number of works unexamined: **41**

Published works only

Total number of works: **178**

Number of works examined: **140**

Number of works unexamined: **38**

1977

Missa Brevis (Choir), rev. 2007

1979

The Lamb has come for us from the House of David (Choir and organ)

1981

Study on Two Planes (Cello and piano)*
Blacksmith (Vocal arrangement of an Irish traditional song for voice and B flat clarinet)#

1982

Etwas zurückhaltend (String Quartet), rev. 2008

1983

The Road to Ardtalla (Chamber sextet)
The Piper at the Gates of Dawn (Chamber ensemble)*
Three Dawn Rituals (Chamber ensemble)
Wedding Introit (Organ)
Beatus Vir (Choir and organ)*#

1984

On Love (Solo voice/unison trebles and organ)
Songs of a Just War (Soprano and six players)*

1985

Piano Sonata
St Anne's Mass (Congregation and organ)

1986

Two Visions of Hoy (Oboe and ensemble)
The Keening (Orchestra)*#
Festival Fanfares (Brass band)

1987

Untold (Wind Quintet)#
Litanies of Iron and Stone (Three instruments and tape)*#
Comet New-Born, Arising at Morning (Cabaret singer and seven players)*#
Two Movements for Wind Quintet

1988

After the Tryst (Violin and Piano)
Búsqueda (Speakers, actors, sopranos and ensemble)
Into the Ferment (Ensemble and orchestra)
Variation on Johnny Faa' (Soprano and chamber ensemble)#
Fons pietatis (Choir)*
Visions of a November Spring (String Quartet)

1989

Tryst (Orchestra)
The Cumnock Orcadian (Young musicians)#
Ruin (Choir)#
Cantos Sagrados (Choir and organ, orch. 1997)
The Exorcism of Rio Sumpul (Mixed ensemble or chamber orchestra)

1990

The Beserking (Piano Concerto No. 1)
...as others see us... (Mixed ensemble)
The Confession of Isobel Gowdie (Orchestra)
Sowetan Spring (Wind band)
Catherine's Lullabies (Choir, brass and percussion)

⁸² These works have not been examined due to practical reasons, such as no existence of a recording or difficulty in obtaining a score.

1991

Scots Song (Soprano and quintet or piano)

Tuireadh (Clarinet quintet)

Divo Aloysio Sacrum (Choir)

A Cecilian Variation for JFK (Piano)

Intercession (Three oboes or saxophones)#

Sinfonietta (Orchestra)

1992

Veni, Veni, Emmanuel (Percussion concerto)

Barncleupédie (Piano)

So Deep (Choir)

1993

Visitatio Sepulchri (Seven singers and chamber orchestra)

Kiss on Wood (Violin or Cello and piano, orch. 2008)

Angel (Piano)

...here in hiding... (Four male voices or choir)

They saw the stone had been rolled away (Brass and percussion)

Memoire imperiale (Orchestra)#

Seven Last Words from the Cross (Choir and string orchestra)

1994

Ballad (Voice and piano)

Britannia (Orchestra)

Memento (String quartet)

Christus Vincit (Choir)

White Note Paraphrase (Organ)

1995

Adam's Rib (Brass quintet)

Mairi (Sixteen-part choir)

Seinte Mari moder milde (Choir and organ)

The Children (Medium voice and piano)

A Different World (Violin and piano)

Inés de Castro (Opera), 1991-5

1996

Triduum I: The World's Ransoming

(Concertante cor anglais and orchestra)

Triduum II: Cello Concerto

A Child's Prayer (Two treble soloists & choir)

The Galloway Mass (Congregation and organ)

The Halie Speerit's Dauncers (Children's choir and piano)

On the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin (Choir and organ)

Ninian (Clarinet concerto)

I – A Meditation on Iona (Strings and percussion)

1997

Fourteen Little Pictures (Piano trio)

The Gallant Weaver (Choir)

Lumen Christi (Piano)

Triduum III: Symphony 'Vigil' (Orchestra)

The Prophecy (Soprano or children's choir and ensemble)#

Raising Sparks (Song cycle, mezzo-soprano and ensemble)

Why is this night different? (String quartet)

Changed (Choir, organ, harp, string trio or any three like instruments)

Birthday Present (Piano)

A New Song (Choir)

1998

Exsultet (Brass quintet and optional percussion),

Gaudeamus in loci pace (Organ)

Quickening (Soli - ATTB, chorus, children's chorus and orchestra)

Epiclesis (Trumpet concerto)

1999

Cello Sonata No. 1

The Company of Heaven (Children's choir, organ, wind band and optional carnyx)#

Cumnock Fair (Piano sextet or string orchestra and piano)

Fanfare for the Reopening of the Scottish Parliament (Brass)*

Heyoka Te Deum (Three-part treble voices, flute, tubular bells and piano)

Magnificat (Choir and organ or orchestra)

Symphony No. 2 (Chamber orchestra)

2000

For Ian (Piano)

Mass (Choir and organ)

Nunc Dimittis (Choir and organ or orchestra)
Parthenogenesis (Chamber opera, soprano, baritone, actress and chamber ensemble)
From Galloway (Clarinet)
Northern Skies (Album of easy pieces for cello and piano)
Cello Sonata No. 2

2001

In angustiis...I (Piano)
In angustiis...II (Solo soprano, oboe or cello)
The Birds of Rhiannon (Orchestra with optional chorus)
Tremeunt videntes angeli (Choir)
Te Deum (Choir and organ)
Dutch Carol (Unison treble voices and piano)#

2002

A Deep but Dazzling Darkness (Violin, ensemble and tape)
For Neil (Piano)
25th May 1967 (Piano)
O bone Jesu (Choir)
To My Successor (Choir)#
Symphony No. 3 'Silence'

2003

Piano Concerto No. 2, 1999; 2003
Le Tombeau de Georges Rouault (Organ)
Chosen (Choir and organ)
Give me Justice (Choir)

2004

A Scotch Bestiary (Organ concerto)
For Max (Piano and string quartet)
For Michael (Piano quintet)#
HB to MB (Cello)#
Laudi alla Vergine Maria (Choir)
Gospel Acclamation (Chant, unison voices)#
The Lord is my life and my help (Introit, unaccompanied chant for unison voices)#
Remember your mercies, Lord (Entrance antiphon, unaccompanied chant)#

2005

From Ayrshire (Violin and orchestra)

Out of the depths (Responsorial psalm for choir)#
The Spirit of the Lord fills the whole world (Entrance antiphon for choir)#
Factus est repente (Choir)+
In splendoribus sanctorum (Choir)+
Sedebit Dominus Rex (choir)+
Videns Dominus (choir)+
When he calls to me, I will answer (Entrance antiphon, unaccompanied chant)#

2006

The Sacrifice (Opera), 2005-6
Sun Dogs (Choir)
Stomp (with Fate and Elvira) (Orchestra)
Nemo te condemnavit (Choir)
For Sally (Piano quintet)
Tenebrae Responses (Choir)
Success (Choir)#
After Virtue (Choir)
Bless the Lord, my soul (Responsorial psalm, unaccompanied chant for unison voices)#
Invocation (Choir)
Let the sons of Israel say (Responsorial psalm for SATB choir)#
O Lord, you had just cause (Entrance Antiphon, unaccompanied chant)#
Dominus dabit benignitatem (Choir)+
Mitte manum tuam (Choir)+

2007

String Quartet No. 3
Chant for John (Piano quartet)#
Horn Quintet
...fiat mihi... (Choir)
St John Passion (Baritone solo, semi-chorus, chorus and orchestra)
Our Father, Doxology, Acclamation and Great Amen (Unison voices with organ)#
The Canticle of Zachariah (Choir)+
O Radiant Dawn (Choir)+
Data est mihi omnis potestas (Choir)+
Jebel (Brass band)
Psalm 23 (Choir and organ)*

2008

Pascha nostrum immolatus est (Choir)+#
Lux aeterna (Choir)+
O (Three-part treble choir, trumpet and strings)

Padre Pio's Prayer (Choir and organ)
The Song of the Lamb (Choir and organ)#
Lament of Mary, Queen of Scots (Soprano, tenor, violin, cello and piano)
Os mutorum/Mouth of the Dumb (Two treble soli or chorus and harp)+
Walfrid, On His Arrival At The Gates Of Paradise (Piano)
Piano Concerto No. 3'Mysteries of Light'#

2009

Who are these Angels? (SSATB or TTBarBB soli and string quartet)
Miserere (Choir)
Jubilate Deo (Choir)
Summae Trinitati (Choir, trumpets, trombones, timpani and organ)
Serenity (Choir and organ)
Benedictus Deus (Choir and organ)
Violin Concerto
And lo, the Angel of the Lord came upon them (Choir)#
The Beneficiaries (Soprano, clarinet and piano)
Bring us, O Lord God (Choir)#
Tota pulchra es (Choir and organ)#

2010

Tu es Petrus (Choir, organ, brass and percussion)
Think of how God loves you (Choir)#
Meditation (Organ)#
Mass of Blessed John Henry Newman (Congregation and organ)
Lassie, Wad Ye Loe Me? (Choir)
Ave Maria (Choir and organ)#
Clemency (Chamber opera, five singers and strings)
Domine non secundum peccata nostra (Choir and solo violin)
Oboe Concerto
Seraph (Concertino for trumpet and strings)
Qui meditabitur (Choir)+#
Processional (Organ, brass and percussion)#
Sonnet (Vocal duet)#
Missa Dunelmi (Choir)

Appendix B: 'Private Passions' Lists

'Private Passions' is a programme hosted by composer Michael Berkeley on BBC Radio 3. Guests, from various professions, are invited to choose eight or nine works that have some particular significance to them. On the programme, recordings of these choices are played, and preceding each chosen work, the guest discusses his/her reasons for choosing the piece. In 1996, MacMillan was a guest on this programme and gave nine choices. Thirteen years later, I asked the composer what he would choose now (in 2009). Below are these respective lists. It should be noted that in contributing to the later list, MacMillan commented that he had no recollection of what he chose for the original, 1996 version. The order of these pieces has been organized by the author, to demonstrate similarities between the two lists where relevant.

James MacMillan on Radio 3's 'Private Passions', 2nd March 1996

1. **Mozart:**
Clarinet Quintet
2. **Beethoven:**
Fidelio (excerpt).
3. **Ustvolskaya:**
Composition No. 3
(Benedictus qui venit)
4. **Byrd:**
Mass for 4 voices. Music
5. **Casken.**
Vaganza
6. **Wagner:**
Gotterdammerung
(excerpt).
7. **Messiaen:**
*Et exspecto resurrectionem
mortuorum.*
8. **Bach:**
Magnificat/The "48"
9. **Traditional:**
MacCrimmon's Lament.

James MacMillan on mock 'Private Passions', 9th May 2009

1. **Mozart:**
Piano Concerto No. 21
2. **Shostakovich:**
*The Execution of Stepan
Razin*
3. **Schnittke:**
Epilogue from *Peer Gynt*
4. **Victoria:**
Tenebrae Responses
5. **Casken:**
Violin Concerto
6. **Wagner:**
Liebestod from *Tristan und
Isolde*
7. **Messiaen:**
*Et exspecto resurrectionem
mortuorum.*
8. **Bach:**
Magnificat
9. **Perotin:**
Viderent omnes

Appendix C1: Instances of Quotation from other composers' music in MacMillan's works, 1982-2010

Allegri

Miserere: Miserere (plainchant)

Anthems/Folk songs

...as others see us...: An old Scottish dance tune⁸³

Britannia: Rule Britannia!⁸⁴

Birthday Present: Happy Birthday

The Blacksmith: The Blacksmith

Britannia: Knees up, Mother Brown

The Confession of Isobel Gowdie: The Cruel Mother

Piano Concerto No. 2: A Parcel o' Rogues in a Nation

A Scotch Bestiary: A Parcel o' Rogues in a Nation

Sinfonietta: The Sash

Sowetan Spring: Nkosi Sikelel' I Afrika

Untold: For Ireland I'll not tell her Name

Variation on Johnny Faa': Johnny Faa'

Wedding Introit: She moved through the Fair

Bach chorales

A Different World: Passion Chorale 7676D

St John Passion (Movement VII 'Jesus and his Mother'): Passion Chorale 7676D

...fiat mihi...: Passion Chorale 7676D

The World's Ransoming: Concluding chorale from Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig BWV 26

Berio

Búsqueda: Laborintus II

Britten

St John Passion ("Crucifixus" in Movement IV 'Jesus is condemned to death'): War Requiem (concluding chords)

Burns, Robert

Barncléupiedie: Will ye no come back again?

From Ayrshire: Ca' the Yowes

So Deep: O my luve's like a red, red rose

⁸³ This is the only description MacMillan gives in his programme note for the work: <
<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-as-others-see-us/1116>>

⁸⁴ Although technically this should be classified as a reference to Thomas Arne's masque, *Alfred*, written in 1740, the specific anthem 'Rule Britannia' has gained independence from its dramatic origins, and has been assumed almost as a second national anthem in Britain. It is, for example, always sung at the Last Night of the Proms, and it is clear that it is to this type of patriotic culture that MacMillan is referring. As such, it is far more appropriate to list this item with the various other anthems he has quoted in works than as a reference to Arne.

Carver, Robert

O bone Jesu: O bone Jesu

Donizetti

Piano Concerto No. 2 (Movement II 'shambards'): Lucia di Lammermoor
(Mad Scene, Act III)

Elgar

Britannia: Cockaigne Overture

French, John

Cumnock Fair: Mr James Boswell's Jig

Cumnock Fair: Mrs Boswell of Auchinleck's Reel

Cumnock Fair: Cumnock Fair

Haydn

Seraph: Trumpet Concert (Movement III)

Henry VIII

...as others see us... (Movement I 'Henry VIII'): Greensleeves

Mozart

Stomp (with Fate and Elvira): Piano Concerto No. 21 (Movement II)

Mussorgsky

A Scotch Bestiary: Pictures at an Exhibition

...as others see us...: Pictures at an Exhibition

Plainchant and Hymns

A Deep but Dazzling Darkness: L'homme armé (Renaissance secular song)⁸⁵

Búsqueda: Credo III (L.U. 68-70)

Catherine's Lullabies: Credo III (L.U. 68-70)

Cello Concerto (I): *Crucem tuam adoramus, Domine* (L.U. 708)

Cello Concerto (II): *Reproaches: My people, what have I done to you?*
(L.U. 704)

Cello Concerto (II): *Dunblane Cathedral* (Scottish Presbyterian hymn)

Cello Concerto (III): *Crux fidelis* (L.U. 709)

The Confession of Isobel Gowdie: Lux aeterna (L.U. 1815)

Epiclesis: Adoro te devote (Thomas Aquinas, 13th Century)

Exsultet: Exsultet (Roman Missal)

...here in hiding...: Adoro te devote (Thomas Aquinas, 13th Century)

⁸⁵ For a detailed investigation into the origins of *L'homme armé*, see: Planchart, Alejandro Enrique, 2003. 'The Origins and Early History of "L'homme armé"', *The Journal of Musicology*, 20:3 (Summer, 2003). University of California Press, pp. 305-357.

In angustiis...I: L'homme armé (Renaissance secular song)
In angustiis...II: L'homme armé (Renaissance secular song)
Kiss on Wood: Ecce lignum crucis (L.U. 704)
Lumen Christi: Lumen Christi (L.U. 739)
Lux aeterna: Lux aeterna (L.U. 1815)
Nemo te condemnavit: Nemo te condemnavit
Quickening (I): A chant used to celebrate John the Baptist's birthday
Seven Last Words from the Cross (III): Venite adoremus (L.U. 704)
Seven Last Words from the Cross (VII): Ecce lignum crucis (L.U. 704)
St John Passion: Crucifixus from Credo III (L.U. 68-70)
Symphony: 'Vigil' (II): Exsultet (Roman Missal)
Symphony: 'Vigil' (II): Lumen Christi (L.U. 739)
Veni, veni Emmanuel: Ubi caritas (L.U. 664)
Veni, veni Emmanuel: Veni, veni Emmanuel (9th or 12th Century hymn)
Violin Concerto (Movement III 'Dance and Song'): Dies Irae (L.U. 1810)
Visitatio Sepulchri (Scene 3): Credo III (L.U. 68-70)
Visitatio Sepulchri (Scene 3): Te Deum (L.U. 1832)
The World's Ransoming: Ubi caritas (L.U. 664)
The World's Ransoming: Pange lingua (Thomas Aquinas), (L.U. 957)

Prokofiev

A Scotch Bestiary (Movement V 'Uncle Tom Cat and his Chickens'): Peter and the Wolf (the Cat)

Purcell

A Cecilian Variation for J.F.K.: Welcome to all the pleasures

Saint-Saëns

A Scotch Bestiary (Movement XI 'The Reverend Cuckoo and his Parroting Chorus'): *Carnival of the Animals* (Movement IX 'The Cuckoo')
Piano Concerto No. 2 (conclusion of Movement III 'shamnation'):
Carnival of the Animals (Movement VI 'Kangaroos')

Tallis

O Radiant Dawn: O Nata Lux

Tchaikovsky

Stomp (with Fate and Elvira): Symphony No. 4 ('Fate' motive)

Victoria

St John Passion (III): *Tenebrae Responses – Responsorium V* 'Judas mercator'

Wagner

Piano Sonata (Movement III): *Tristan und Isolde*
Symphony No. 2: Tristan und Isolde
St John Passion: Tristan und Isolde
St John Passion: Siegfried's Funeral March from *Götterdämmerung*

Miserere: Tristan und Isolde

Symphony No. 3 'Silence': Das Rheingold

A Scotch Bestiary (Part II 'The menagerie, uncaged'): 'The Ride of the Varkyries' from Die Walküre

Etwas zurückhaltend: Various motifs from The Ring, especially Götterdämmerung, from which the work takes its title

Appendix C2 (alternative view): Instances of Quotation from other composers' music in MacMillan's works, 1982-2010

...as others see us...

An old Scottish dance tune⁸⁶

Henry VIII: *Greensleeves*

Mussorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition*

Barncléupédie

Robert Burns: *Will ye no come back again?*

Birthday Present

Happy Birthday

The Blacksmith

Folksong: *The Blacksmith*

Britannia

British popular song: *Knees up, Mother Brown*

Arne: 'Rule Britannia!' from *Alfred*

Elgar: *Cockaigne Overture*

Búsqueda

Plainchant: *Credo III* (L.U. 68-70)

Berio: *Laborintus II*

Catherine's Lullabies

Plainchant: *Credo III* (L.U. 68-70)

A Cecilian Variation for J.F.K.

Purcell: *Welcome to all the pleasures*

Cello Concerto

Plainchant: *Crucem tuam adoramus, Domine* (L.U. 708)

Plainchant: *Popule meus, quid feci tibi?* (L.U. 704)

Plainchant: *Dunblane Cathedral* (Scottish Presbyterian hymn)

Plainchant: *Crux fidelis* (L.U. 709)

The Confession of Isobel Gowdie

Plainchant: *Lux aeterna* (L.U. 1815)

Folksong: *The Cruel Mother*

A Different World

Bach: *Passion Chorale 7676D*

⁸⁶ This is the only description MacMillan gives in his programme note for the work: <
<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-as-others-see-us/1116>>

Cumnock Fair

John French: *Mr James Boswell's Jig*

John French: *Mrs Boswell of Auchinleck's Reel*

John French: *Cumnock Fair*

A Deep but Dazzling Darkness

L'homme armé (Renaissance secular song)⁸⁷

Epiclesis

Plainchant: *Adoro te devote* (Thomas Aquinas, 13th Century)

Etwas zurückhaltend

Wagner: Various motifs from *The Ring*, especially *Götterdämmerung*, from which the work takes its title

Exsultet

Plainchant: *Exsultet*

...fiat mihi...

Bach: *Passion Chorale* 7676D

From Ayrshire

Robert Burns: *Ca' the Yowes*

...here in hiding...

Plainchant: *Adoro te devote* (Thomas Aquinas, 13th Century)

In angustiis...I

L'homme armé (Renaissance secular song)

In angustiis...II

L'homme armé (Renaissance secular song)

Kiss on Wood

Plainchant: *Ecce lignum crucis* (L.U. 704)

Lumen Christi

Plainchant: *Lumen Christi* (L.U. 739)

Lux aeterna

Plainchant: *Lux aeterna* (L.U. 1815)

⁸⁷ For a detailed investigation into the origins of *L'homme armé*, see: Planchart, Alejandro Enrique, 2003. 'The Origins and Early History of "L'homme armé"', *The Journal of Musicology*, 20:3 (Summer, 2003). University of California Press, pp. 305-357.

Miserere

Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde*

Allegrì: *Miserere* (plainchant)

Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde*

Nemo te condemnavit

Plainchant: *Nemo te condemnavit*

O bone Jesu

Robert Carver: *O bone Jesu*

O Radiant Dawn

Tallis: *O Nata Lux*

Piano Concerto No. 2

John French: *Mr James Boswell's Jig*

John French: *Mrs Boswell of Auchinleck's Reel*

John French: *Cumnock Fair*

Saint-Saëns: *Carnival of the Animals* (Movement VI 'Kangaroos')

Donizetti: *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Mad Scene, Act III)

Folk song: A Parcel o' Rogues in a Nation

Piano Sonata

Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde*

Quickening

Plainchant: A chant used to celebrate John the Baptist's birthday

A Scotch Bestiary

Wagner: 'The Ride of the Valkyries' from *Die Walküre*

Saint-Saëns: *Carnival of the Animals*

Mussorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition*

Saint-Saëns: *Carnival of the Animals*

Prokofiev: *Peter and the Wolf* (the Cat)

Folk song: A Parcel o' Rogues in a Nation

Seraph

Haydn: *Trumpet Concerto* (Movement III)

Seven Last Words from the Cross

Plainchant: *Venite adoremus* (L.U. 704)

Plainchant: *Ecce lignum crucis* (L.U. 704)

Sinfonietta

Orange March anthem: *The Sash my Father wore*

So Deep

Robert Burns: *O my luve's like a red, red rose*

Sowetan Spring

National Anthem: *Nkosi Sikelel' I Afrika*

St John Passion

Plainchant: *Crucifixus* from *Credo III* (L.U. 68-70)

Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde*

Wagner: Siegfried's Funeral March from *Götterdämmerung*

Britten: Conclusion of *War Requiem*

Bach: Passion Chorale 7676D

Victoria: Responsorium V 'Judas mercator' from *Tenebrae Responses*

Stomp (with Fate and Elvira)

Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 21

Tchaikovsky: *Symphony No. 4*

Symphony: 'Vigil'

Plainchant: Exsultet

Plainchant: *Lumen Christi* (L.U. 739)

Symphony No. 2

Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde*

Symphony No. 3

Das Rheingold

Untold

Folksong: *For Ireland I'll not tell her Name*

Variation on Johnny Faa'

Folksong: *Johnny Faa'*

Veni, veni Emmanuel

Veni, veni Emmanuel (9th or 12th Century hymn)

Violin Concerto

Plainchant: Dies Irae (L.U. 1810)

Visitatio Sepulchri

Plainchant: *Credo III* (L.U. 68-70)

Plainchant: *Te Deum* (L.U. 1832)

The World's Ransoming

Plainchant: *Ubi caritas* (L.U. 664)

Plainchant: *Pange lingua* (Thomas Aquinas), (L.U. 957)

Bach: *Ach wie nichts* (chorale)

**Appendix D: Seven portraits from the National Portrait Gallery,
referring to the six movements of MacMillan's *...as others see us...***

1. King Henry VIII

Hans Holbein the Younger, c. 1536-1537

NPG 4027



2. John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester

Unknown Artist, c. 1665-1670

NPG 804



3. John Churchill, 1st Duke of Malborough,
Sir Godfrey Kneller, c. 1706
NPG 902

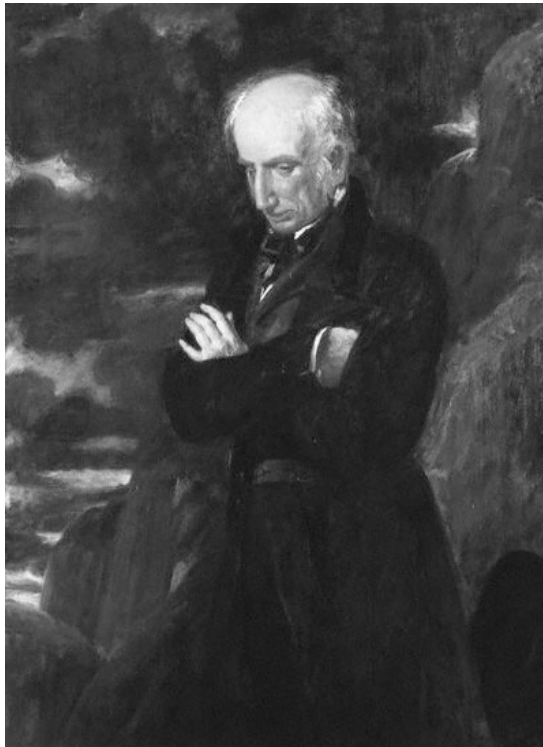


4. Byron and Wordsworth

George Gordon Byron, 6th Baron Byron
Replica by Thomas Phillips, c. 1835
NPG 142



William Wordsworth
Benjamin Robert Haydon, 1842
NPG 1857



5. Thomas Stearns Eliot

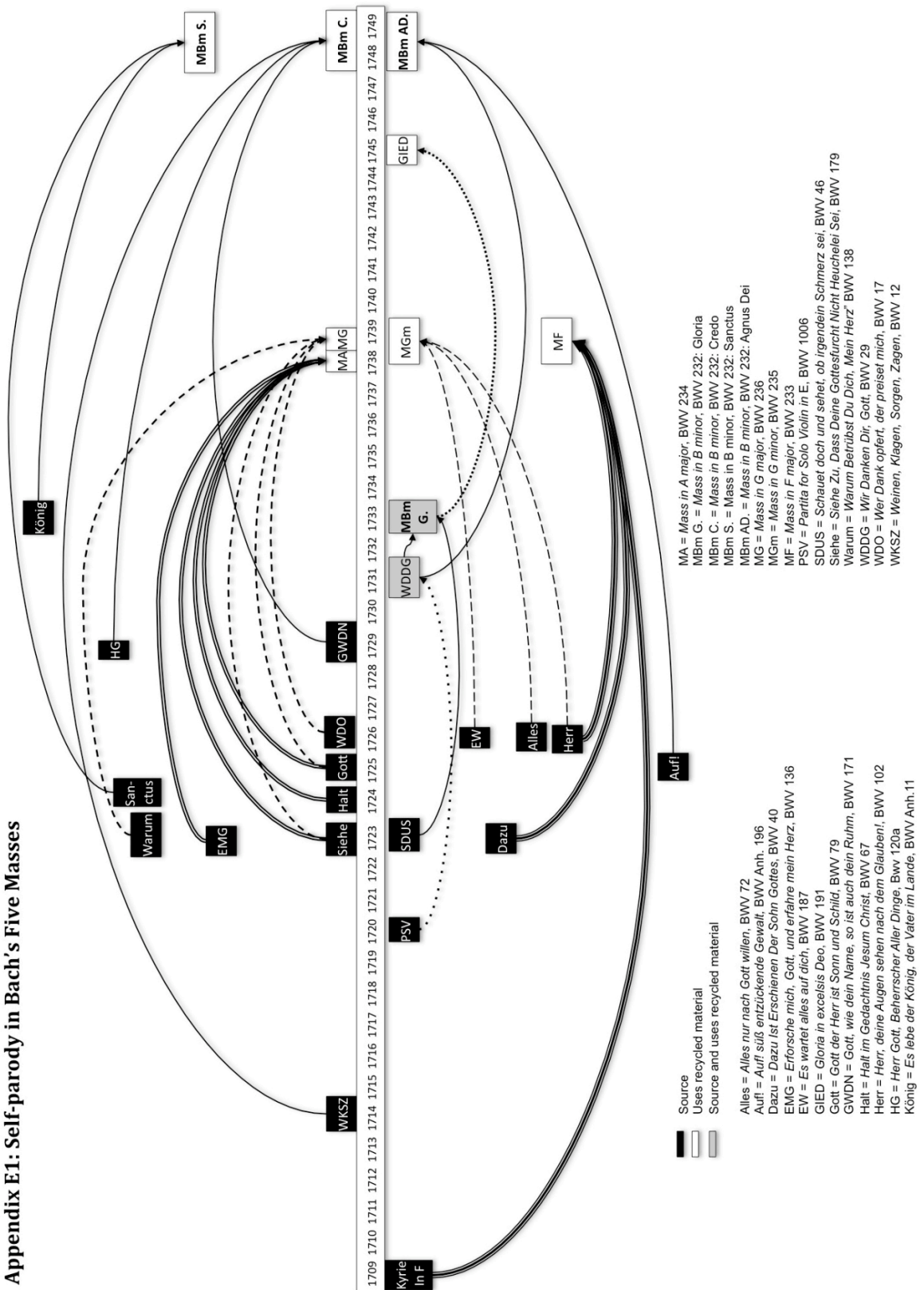
Patrick Heron, 1949
NPG 4467



6. Dorothy Mary Crowfoot Hodgkin
Maggi Hambling, 1985
NPG 5797



Appendix E1: Self-parody in Bach's Five Masses



Appendix E2: Self-parody in Bach's Four *Missae breves*

Missa in F, BWV 233

Kyrie, BWV 233a

'Kyrie'

Herr, deine Augen sehen nach dem Glauben!, BWV 102

'Qui tollis' and 'Quoniam'

Dazu Ist Erschienen Der Sohn Gottes, BWV 40

'Cum sancto Spiritu'

Missa in A, BWV 234

Halt im Gedachtnis Jesum Christ, BWV 67

'Gloria in excelsis'

Siehe Zu, Dass Deine Gottesfurcht Nicht Heuchelei Sei, BWV 179

'Qui tollis'

Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild, BWV 79

'Quoniam'

Erforsche mich, Gott, und erfahre mein Herz, BWV 136

'Cum sancto Spiritu'

Missa in G minor, BWV 235

Herr, deine Augen sehen nach dem Glauben!, BWV 102

'Kyrie'

Alles nur nach Gott willen, BWV 72

'Gloria in excelsis'

Es wartet alles auf dich, BWV 187

'Gratias, Domine Fili', 'Qui tollis', 'Quoniam' and 'Cum sancto Spritu'

Missa in G major, BWV 236

Siehe Zu, Dass Deine Gottesfurcht Nicht Heuchelei Sei, BWV 179

'Kyrie' and 'Quoniam'

Gott der Herr ist Sonn und Schild, BWV 79

'Gloria in excelsis' and 'Domine Deus'

Warum Betrübst Du Dich, Mein Herz, BWV 138

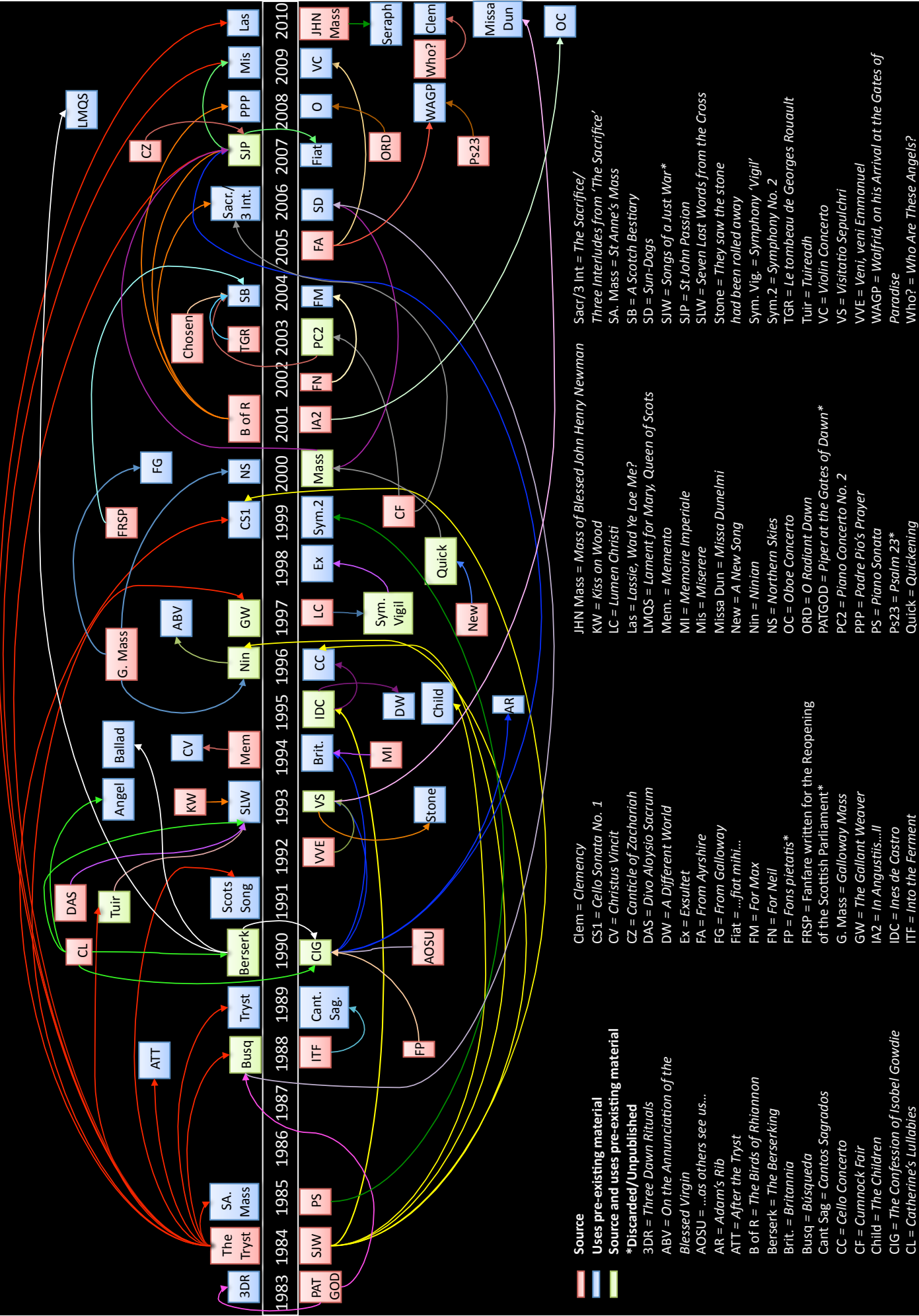
'Gratias'

Wer Dank opfert, der preiset mich, BWV 17

'Cum sancto Spritu'

"I'm aware of a continuum in progress where everything I've done so far is informing or shaping the next stage of development." (MacMillan in McGregor, 2010: 93)

Appendix F1: Recycling and Self-quotation in MacMillan's works, 1983-2010



Appendix F2: Recycling and Self-quotation in MacMillan's works, 1983-2010

The information below is a textual version of Appendix F1. The works are organized in chronological order according to the 'source' in each case, indicated in bold below and by the red and green boxes in Appendix F1. Thus, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* and the works with which it shares some of its musical material are listed first, followed by *The Tryst* and its related works, then *Songs of a Just War*, etc. Where works are divided into movements, the specific movement that reuses the musical material is indicated.

***The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* (no date: 1983 or earlier)**

Three Dawn Rituals, 1983

Búsqueda, 1988

***The Tryst*, 1984**

St Anne's Mass (Sanctus), 1985

After The Tryst, 1988

Búsqueda, 1988 (conclusion)

Tryst, 1989

Scots Song, 1991

Tuireadh, 1991

Gallant Weaver, 1997

Cello Sonata No. 1, 1999 (Movement I 'Face')

St John Passion, 2007 (Movement X 'Sanctus Immortalis, Miserere Nobis')

Miserere, 2009

Lassie, Wad Ye Loe Me?, 2010

***Songs of a Just War*, 1984 (Movement II 'The Children')**

Inés de Castro, 1991-5 (Act II, Scene 1 and Act II, Scene 4)

The Children, 1995

Cello Concerto, 1996 (Movement II 'The Reproaches')

Ninian, 1996 (Movement III, 'A Mystical Vision of the Christ-child')

Cello Sonata No. 1, 1999 (Movement I 'Face')

***Piano Sonata*, 1985**

Symphony No. 2, 1999

***Into the Ferment*, 1988 (Movement VIII 'Man to man... shall brithers be...')**

Cantos Sagrados, 1989 (Movement III 'Sun Stone')

Fons pietatis, 1988

The Confession of Isobel Gowdie, 1990

Búsqueda, 1988 (audible breathing at the beginning and conclusion)

Sun-Dogs, 2006 (Movement IV 'Sometimes, like Tobias')

...as others see us..., 1990 (conclusion of Movement VI 'Dorothy Hodgkin')

The Confession of Isobel Gowdie, 1990

Catherine's Lullabies, 1990

The Beserking, 1990 (Movement II and conclusion of Movement III)

The Confession of Isobel Gowdie, 1990

Seven Last Words from the Cross, 1993 (Movement V 'I thirst')

Angel, 1993

The Beserking, 1990

The Confession of Isobel Gowdie, 1990

The Ballad, 1994

Lament for Mary, Queen of Scots, 2008

The Confession of Isobel Gowdie, 1990

Visitatio Sepulchri, 1993 (Movement I 'Scene 1')

Britannia, 1994

Adam's Rib, 1995

St John Passion, 2007 (Movement VIII 'The Reproaches')

Divo Aloysio Sacrum, 1991

Seven Last Words from the Cross, 1993 (Movement II 'Woman, Behold thy Son!')

Tuireadh, 1991

Seven Last Words from the Cross, 1993 (Movements I, VI and VII)

Veni, veni Emmanuel, 1992 (Movements III and VII)

Visitatio Sepulchri, 1993 (Movement II 'Scene 2')

Kiss on Wood, 1993

Seven Last Words from the Cross, 1993 (Movements III "Verily, I say unto you" and VII 'Father, into Thy hand I commend my spirit')

Visitatio Sepulchri, 1993 (Movement II 'Scene 2')

They saw the stone had been rolled away, 1993

Missa Dunelmi, 2010 (Movement II 'Gloria')

Memento, 1994

Christus Vincit, 1994

Memoire Imperiale, 1994

Britannia, 1994

Inés de Castro, 1991-5 (Act I, Scene 7)

A Different World, 1995

Inés de Castro, 1991-5 (Executioner's Scene: Act II, Scene 3)

Cello Concerto, 1996 (Movement I 'The Mockery')

The Galloway Mass, 1996

Ninian, 1996 (Movements I and III)

From Galloway, 2000

Northern Skies, 2000 (Piece No. 3 'Celtic Hymn')

Ninian, 1996 (Movement II 'The Dream of Pectgils')

On the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, 1997

Lumen Christi, 1997

Symphony 'Vigil', 1997 (Movement II 'Tuba resonet salutaris')

Symphony 'Vigil', 1997 (Movement II 'Tuba resonet salutaris')

Exsultet, 1998

A New Song, 1997

Quickening, 1998 (Movement III 'Poppies')

Quickening, 1998 (Movement III 'Poppies', conclusion)

Mass, 2000 (Every movement)

Cumnock Fair, 1999

Piano Concerto No. 2, 1999; 2003 (Movement I 'Cumnock Fair. Fast')

The Sacrifice, 2005-6 (Act I, Scene 4 "Can Love save us?")

Fanfare (written for the Reopening of the Scottish Parliament), 1999

A Scotch Bestiary, 2004 (Movement VI 'Scottish Patriots')

Mass, 2000 (Material used for Preface, Eucharistic Prayer, Memorial Acclamations and verse of Alleluia)

Sun-dogs, 2006 (Movement IV 'Sometimes, like Tobias')

Mass, 2000 (Organ part of the 'Kyrie')

St John Passion, 2007 (Chamber organ part in Movement IV 'Jesus is condemned to death')

The Birds of Rhiannon, 2001

The Sacrifice, 2005-6

Three Interludes from 'The Sacrifice', 2006

St John Passion, 2007 (Movement V 'The Crucifixion')

Padre Pio's Prayer, 2008

***In Angustiis... II*, 2001**

Oboe Concerto, 2009-10 (Movement II)

***For Neil*, 2002**

For Max, 2004

***Chosen*, 2003**

A Scotch Bestiary, 2003-2004 (Part I, Movement II 'Ode to a Cro-Magnon Hyena')

***Le tombeau de Georges Rouault*, 2003**

A Scotch Bestiary, 2003-2004 (Part II, 'The Menagerie, Uncaged')

***Piano Concerto No. 2*, 2003⁸⁸ (Movement III 'shamnation')**

A Scotch Bestiary, 2003-2004 (Movement V 'Her Serene and Ubiquitous Majesty, Queen Bee')

***From Ayrshire*, 2005 (Movement II)**

Walfrid, on his Arrival at the Gates of Paradise, 2008

Violin Concerto, 2009 (Movement I 'Dance')

Canticle of Zachariah

St John Passion, 2007 (Narrator-chorus sections)

***St John Passion*, 2007 (Movement VII 'Jesus and his Mother')**

...fiat mihi..., 2007

***St John Passion*, 2007 (Movement X 'Sanctus Immortalis, Miserere Nobis')**

Miserere, 2009

***O Radiant Dawn*, 2007**

O, 2008

⁸⁸ Although the *Piano Concerto No. 2* was originally composed in 1999, MacMillan revised it in 2003 and it was only published in 2003. In addition, it was not premiered until 2004. It therefore seems more appropriate to associate it with the year 2003 rather than 1999, especially since the work shares the same, strong Scottish (though far from nationalistic) flavour as *A Scotch Bestiary*, which MacMillan began to compose in the same year he revised *Piano Concerto No. 2* and which he completed just one year later. The common material, quoted from the third movement of the piano concerto in the third movement of *A Scotch Bestiary* strengthens the argument for considering the two works as a pair written almost simultaneously, rather than four-five years apart.

Psalm 23, The Lord is my Shepherd, 2007

Walfrid, on his Arrival at the Gates of Paradise, 2008

Who are these Angels?, 2009

Clemency, 2010 (Scene 2)

Mass of Blessed John Henry Newman, 2010 (Agnus Dei)

Seraph, 2010 (Movement II)

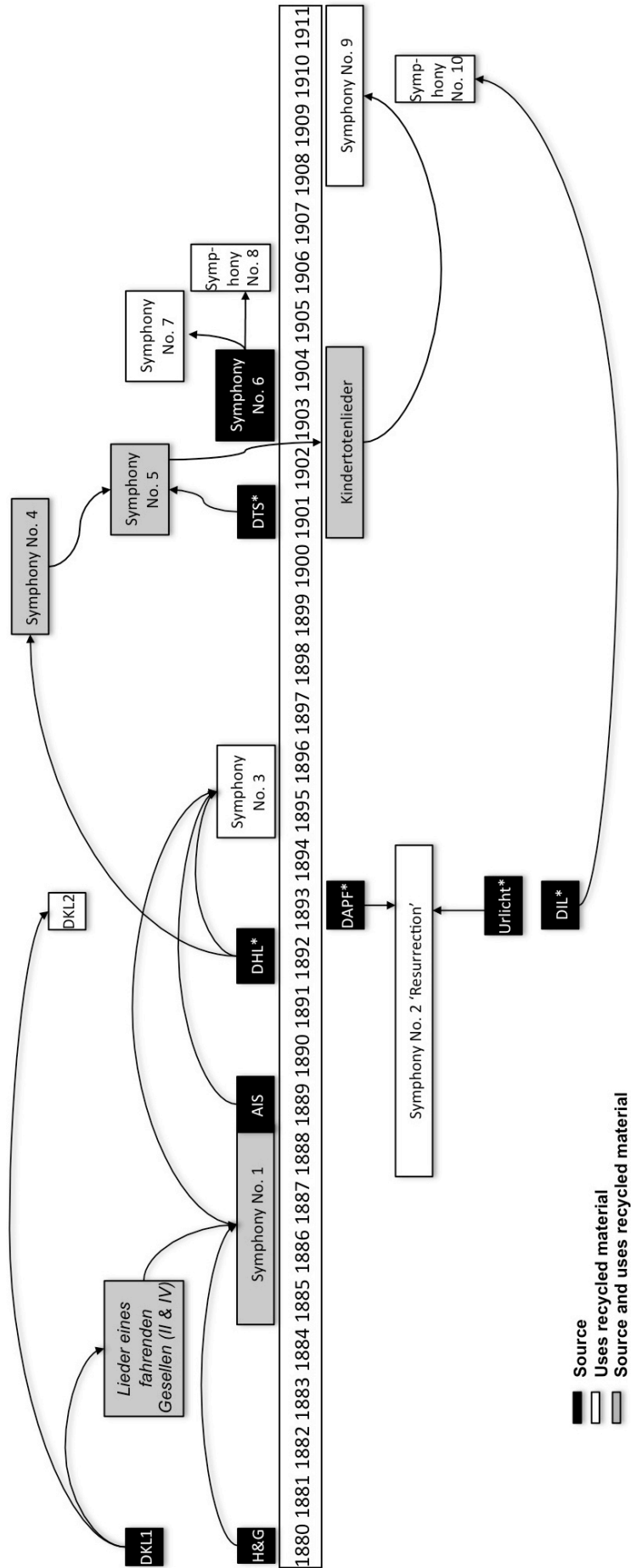
Works sharing some musical material (including ten unpublished works):

80/188 = 42.55%

Works sharing some musical material (published works only):

75/178 = 42.13%

Appendix G: Recycling and Self-quotation in Mahler's Works



AIS = *Ablösung im Sommer*

DAPF = *Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt*

DHL = *Das Himmlische Leben*

DIL = *Das Irdische Leben*

DKL1 = First version of *Das Klagende Lied*, including the first movement, 'Waldmärchen'

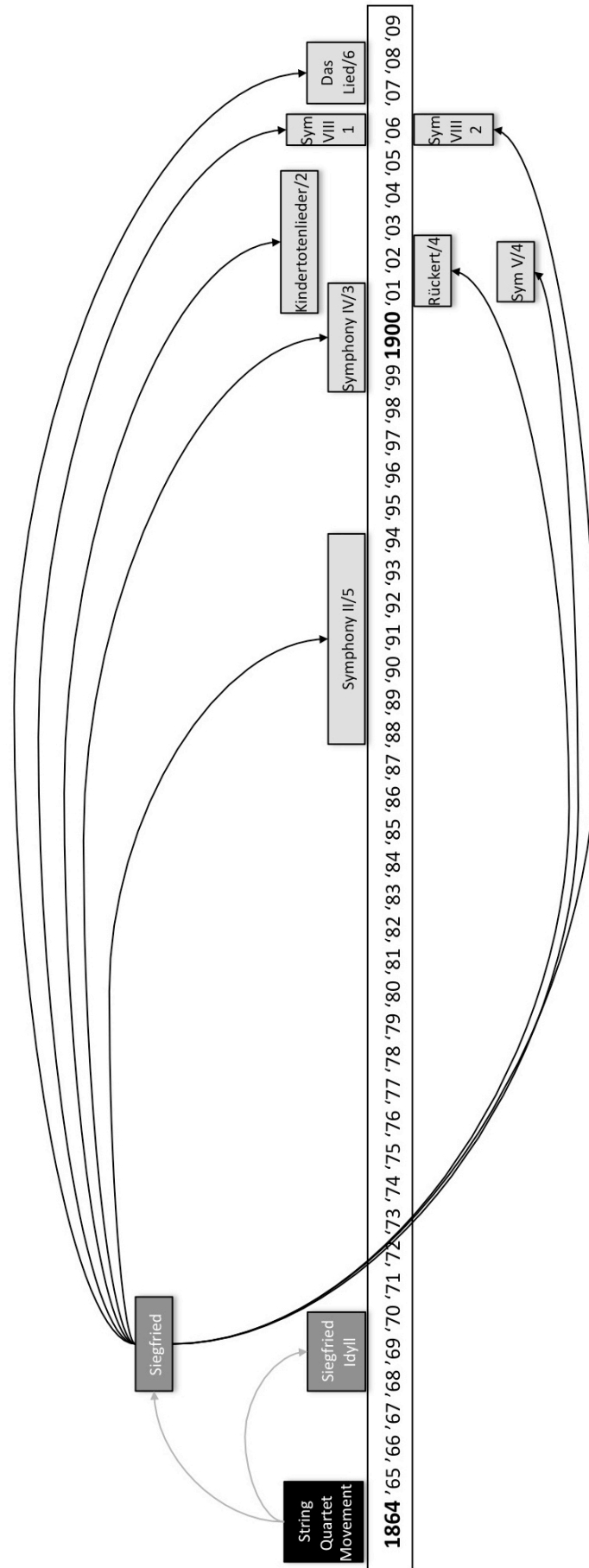
DKL2 = Second version of *Das Klagende Lied*, omitting the first movement, 'Waldmärchen'

DTS = *Der Tambour'sell*

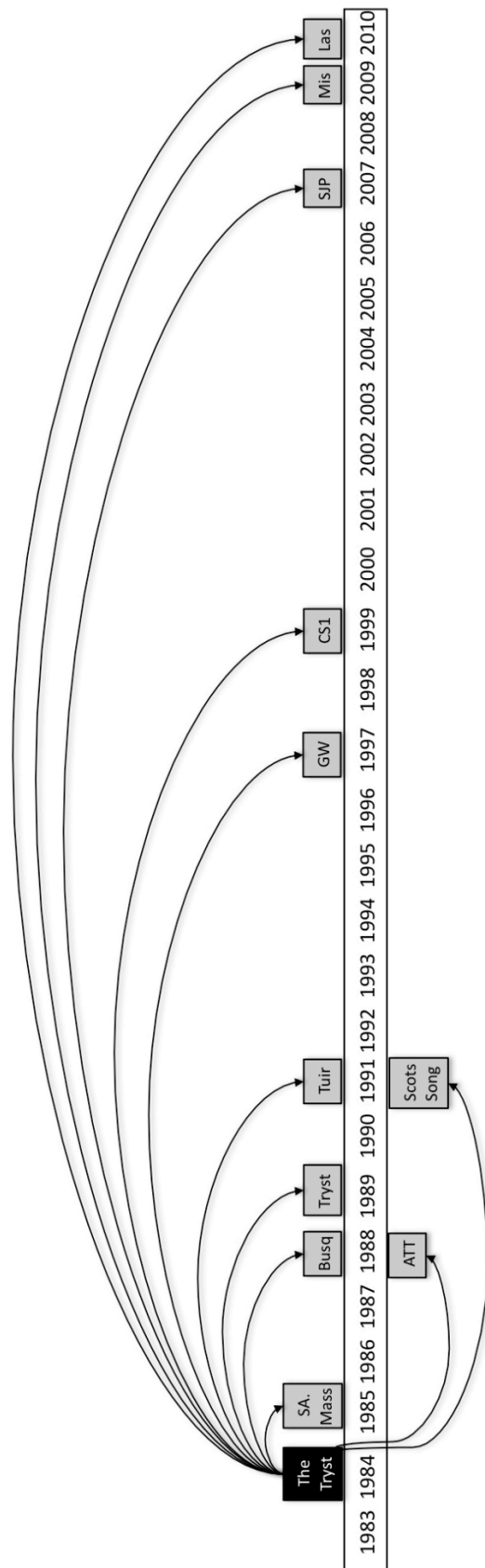
H&G = *Hans und Grete*

*Song from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

Appendix H1: The various incarnations of Wagner's 'Ewigkeit' motive, in Wagner (black/dark grey) and Mahler (light grey)



Appendix H2: The various incarnations of MacMillan's *The Tryst* (extracted from Appendix F1)¹

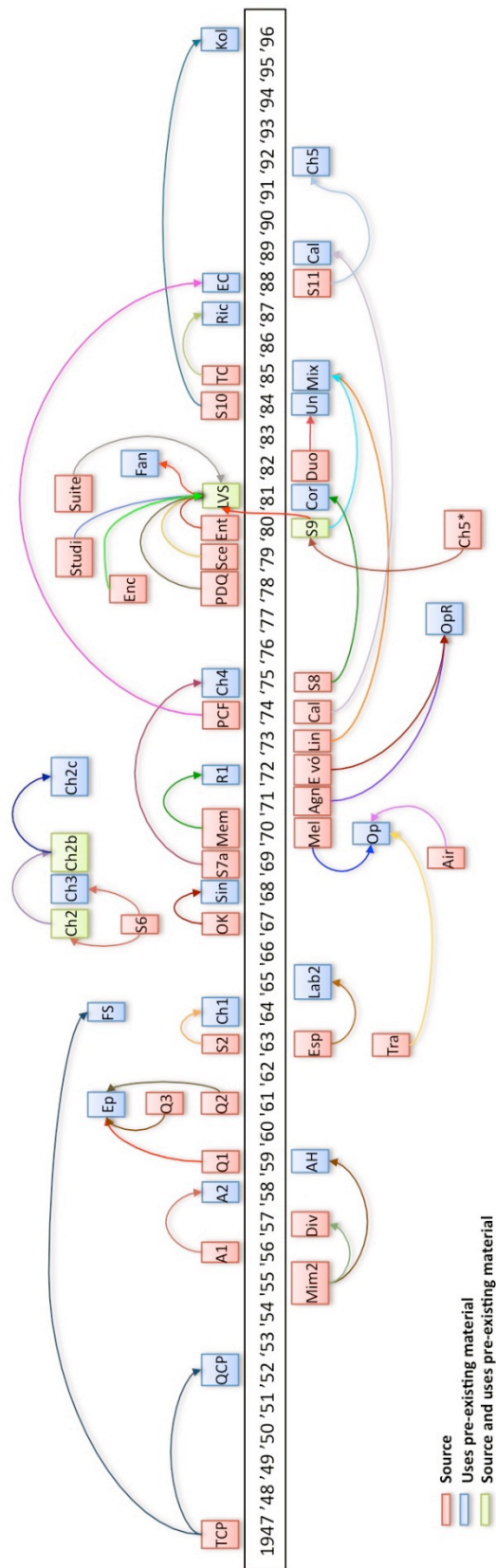


The Tryst

1. SA. Mass = *St Anne's Mass*
2. Busq = *Búsqueda*
3. ATT = *After the Tryst*
4. *Tryst*
5. Tuir = *Tuireadh*
6. *Scots Song*
7. GW = *The Gallant Weaver*
8. CS1 = *Cello Sonata No. 1*
9. SJP = *St John Passion*
10. Mis = *Miserere*
11. Las = *Lassie, Wad Ye Loe Me?*

¹Excluding the subliminal references in *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* and *Violin Concerto*

Appendix I: Recycling and Self-quotation in Berio's works



- TCP = Tre canzoni popolari**
A1 = Alleluiah I*
A2 = Alleluiah II
Agn = Agnus
AH = Allez Hop, "racconto mimico"
Cal = Calmo
Ch1 = Chemins I
Ch2 = Chemins II
Ch3 = Chemins III
Ch4 = Chemins IV
Ch5 = Chemins V
Ch5* = Original, abandoned version of Chemins V
Cor = Corale
Div = Divertimento
Duo = Duo - "teatro immaginario"
EC = Echoing Curves
Enc = Encore
Ep = Epifanie
- Ent = Entrata**
Esp = Esposizione*
Fan = Fanfara
FS = Folk Songs
Kol = Kol Od - Chemins VI
Lab2 = Laborintus II
Lin = Linea
LVS = La vera storia
Mel = Melodrama
Mem = Memory
OK = O King
Op = Opera
OpR = Revised version of Opera (1970 rev. 1977)
PCF = Points on the curve to find... (1974)
PDQ = Pas de Quoi
Q1 = Quaderni I
Q2 = Quaderni II
Q3 = Quaderni III
- QCP = Quattro canzoni popolari**
R1 = Recital I (For Cathy)
Ric = Ricorrenze
S2 = Sequenza II
S6 = Sequenza VI
S7a = Sequenza VIIa
S8 = Sequenza VIII
S9 = Sequenza IX
S10 = Sequenza X
S11 = Sequenza XI
Scen = Scena
Sin = Sinfonia
TC = Terre Chaleureuse
Tra = Traces*
Un = Un re in ascolto
***Discarded/Unpublished**
***Discarded**

Appendix J1: Synopsis of *The Second Branch of the Mabinogi*

Bendigeidfran (Bran) is a giant who is king of London. Several ships arrive from Ireland, and King Matholwch (King of Ireland) requests Bran's sister, Branwen as his wife, in order to unite their two countries and become stronger. Bran agrees, and Matholwch sleeps with Branwen that night. Efnysien, the malicious brother of Bran and Branwen, is offended to learn that this has been arranged without his having been consulted first, and decides to sabotage the arrangement, insulting the Irish king by savagely cutting and maiming all his horses. Upon discovering his horses in this useless condition, Matholwch is confused and offended, and prepares to leave. However, Bran explains about his malevolent brother and apologises for him. Matholwch accepts this apology, and in compensation receives replacement horses and a magic cauldron, which brings dead men back to life, but dumb.

United in wedlock, Branwen and Matholwch journey to Ireland, where the new bride is praised and loved by all, and the couple have a son, Gwern. However this happiness is short-lived, as those in Ireland hear how Matholwch was insulted in Wales with the horses, and urge him to seek revenge. They take Branwen out of the couple's chamber, make her cook for the whole court, and have her ears boxed every day by the butcher as punishment. The Irish convince the king not to allow anyone to go to Wales, nor anyone from Wales to come to Ireland.

In a state of desperation, Branwen trains a bird and sends it off to Wales with a letter. The bird finds Bran, who is grieved and angry to learn of his sister's misfortune. He gathers his armies together and they set to attack Ireland. Where the water cannot be crossed by boat, he lays his enormous body across it, forming a bridge for his men to walk upon. Matholwch's men are apologetic and say Gwern will be invested as king and will rule. Bran initially refuses, but when the deal is made more attractive with the addition of a house built big enough for him to

live in, he accepts, encouraged by Branwen's advice, who is afraid the country will be laid to waste.

The Irish build the house, but place a hundred bags round it, each containing an armed soldier. Efnysien realizes something is wrong, and as he asks someone each time what is in the bag, the response 'flour, friend' is given. After hearing this reply each time, he feels inside the bag and crushes the concealed soldier's head with his bare hands, killing every one of them. Gwern's investiture takes place, and Efnysien calls the boy to come to him, whereupon he picks Gwern up and hurls him into a huge fire. Branwen tries to jump in after him to save her son, but Bran holds her back. The Irish throw all their dead into the cauldron, then Efnysien gets thrown in, and as he stretches out, he breaks the cauldron and his own heart in the process.

Bran, now ridden with guilt, commands that his own head be cut off. He tells his men that they will take the head (which will still be alive) and live in Cornwall feasting for seven years, feeling remorseful about the events. They will hear the Birds of Rhiannon sing their beautiful song, which awakens the dead and send the living to sleep. This melancholy will then pass, and for eighty years they will be happy, until someone opens the door facing Cornwall to Aber Henfelen. Then they will remember the atrocities again, the head will die, and they must go to London to bury it.

Appendix J2: Synopsis of *Inés de Castro*

The drama takes place in twelfth-century Portugal, which is at war with Spain. Inés de Castro, the Spanish mistress of Pedro the Portuguese Prince, is considered a threat to the security of the state. Inés yearns for a happier life and recounts her love for Pedro to her nurse who urges caution. Pacheco, the King's scheming adviser, demands ruthless action to protect the crown, but the King hesitates and Inés pleads for her life and for her children. Blanca, the spurned wife of Pedro, insults Inés and gloats over her impending fall. The King relents and allows the lovers to meet before Inés is banished. Their farewell is interrupted by Pacheco, who blames Pedro's blunders for turning the war to the enemy's advantage. Inés implores Pedro not to abandon her, but he is determined to reverse his military fortunes. The King blesses his son who leads the Portuguese army to war and almost certain defeat.

Left alone and unprotected, Inés is recognised by some Portuguese women and attacked for being an enemy whore. Surprisingly, Blanca comes to her aid, only to express her bitter envy of Inés' motherhood. (Blanca had conceived several children with Pedro but each one was severely deformed and soon died). Pacheco delivers a bag containing the heads of Inés' children, relating the reasons for his loathing of all Spaniards. Inés is comforted by death in the form of an old woman, who leads her away. Pedro, returning after unexpected victory, learns of the murder of Inés and their children, and turns on his father. The King is visited by the deathly old woman who leads him away. The ordinary people sing of the King's funeral and of the feast that is to celebrate the coronation of Pedro. Pacheco's triumph has been short-lived, culminating in a grisly, torturous end, as described in the Executioner's Scene. Pedro, crowned alongside the exhumed corpse of Inés in queen's regalia, taunts his subjects for their rejection of her. The ghost of Inés returns and speaks to the only person who is able to see her – an innocent girl.

Appendix K: Liturgical Wish-List from a Young Catholic (excluding points 5 and 7)⁸⁹

1. Instrumentation. Explicit rules about exactly what is and is not appropriate for liturgical use, with a particular promotion of a) the organ; b) the choir; and c) congregational singing. Guitars (electric or acoustic), keyboards, recorders and tambourines other remnants of the 1970s are simply embarrassing today.
2. Rhythms. Excessive use of syncopated rhythms produces a very secularised effect since it draws attention to itself and is therefore incongruent with its purpose as an aid to prayer.
3. Plainchant. A much greater promotion of and respect for plainchant – the original musical language “of the people” in church. This is an ancient treasure that has been sorely neglected in recent years. In addition to its prayerful nature, it is also extremely practical: no harmony, all the members of the congregation sing together in unison, and no organ/ist is required.
4. Investment. The main reason the Anglican Church excels musically in many of its churches (and certainly its cathedrals) is because it invests in musicians. While the average parish can scarcely afford the salaries of a dozen lay clerks, paying a competent organist/choir master a reasonable fee each week would make a dramatic difference. In the current state, whoever is first to appoint him/herself as music director at a certain church, regardless of his/her musical qualifications (which in some cases is nil), maintains this position for the rest of his/her life.
6. Silence. This is perhaps the greatest loss of all. There is no sense of the numinous, no sense that we should behave in a particular way because we are in a church. Some may have found the Tridentine Rite too austere, but the resuscitation of plainchant would greatly assist the return of awe and respect that is appropriate in a church. After it is sung, a period of silence almost always inevitably follows.
8. There should be a greater promotion of St Augustine’s famous phrase, “Quis cantat, bis orat” – “he/she who sings prays twice”. The schism between those members of the congregation who sing and those who refuse to do so is deeply problematic, as it weakens the whole point of Sunday worship: to do so as one body – as the Church.

⁸⁹ MacMillan, *The Telegraph*, 3.11.10: <<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/culture/jmacmillan/100048506/throw-out-the-guitars-and-bring-back-sacred-silence-%E2%80%93-a-liturgical-wish-list-from-a-young-catholic/>>

Appendix L: Autonomy and Agitprop in the music of MacMillan, Eisler, Andriessen, Schoenberg and Stravinsky

The discussion below seeks to define MacMillan as a ‘political composer’ by placing him in the context of several other composers from differing political perspectives: Andriessen, Stravinsky, Eisler and Schoenberg. Andriessen and Eisler represent what has been called the ‘agitprop’ aesthetic, using music as a vehicle by which a political ideology – or at least political awareness – is promoted. In opposition to this stand Stravinsky and Schoenberg, who represent music as an autonomous art, and uphold the principle of ‘art for the sake of art alone’.⁹⁰

Eisler, Andriessen and MacMillan have all been involved with Marxism: Andriessen is a confirmed Marxist, Eisler spent his entire life in support of Communist, left-wing ideals, and in 1974, MacMillan (at the age of fourteen) joined the Young Communist League. All three composers also experienced a compositional ‘crisis’ before discovering their own particular styles, with each incorporating a range of musical and extramusical elements into his music. For MacMillan, four elements were combined to achieve this: art music, folk music, politics and religion. With Eisler and Andriessen, a similar model can be recognized, though with the substitution of popular musical idioms for MacMillan’s folk music, and the notable absence of religion in favour of philosophy.⁹¹ Neither of these models can be employed to describe accurately either Stravinsky’s or Schoenberg’s compositional styles: Stravinsky’s output is almost entirely apolitical,⁹² while Schoenberg’s

⁹⁰ Schoenberg, 1975: 124.

⁹¹ Eisler’s father, Rudolf Eisler, was a professor of philosophy in Leipzig and Vienna. He was especially influenced by the writings of Immanuel Kant and Wilhelm Wundt. Andriessen has referred to concepts introduced by Hegel (the notion of consciousness and self-consciousness in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, 1807) and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (the notion of the sovereign ego in *The Vocation of the Scholar*, 1794), and ancient philosophy is evident in several of Andriessen’s works, such as *De Staat*, based upon Plato’s *The Republic*.

⁹² Perhaps the closest Stravinsky came to writing a ‘political work’ was the *Symphony in Three Movements*, which he sometimes referred to as a ‘war symphony’. However, the composer stressed that despite using the events of the Second World War as its impetus, the symphony was not a programmatic work. See: Stravinsky, Igor and

political works are minimal (*A Survivor from Warsaw; Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte; Male Chorus Op. 35*). In a letter to J. Rufer (1948) Schoenberg wrote: "We, who live in music, have no place in politics and must regard it as foreign to our being. We are a-political, at best able to aspire to remain silently in the background".⁹³ It is little wonder that Eisler broke away from Schoenberg, his composition teacher, for he maintained an antithetical view, claiming that music's autonomy had to be relinquished.⁹⁴

This inevitably implies a split between the aforementioned composers, distinguishing Schoenberg and Stravinsky from the more politically minded Eisler-Andriessen-MacMillan grouping. However, this division is made more complex by MacMillan's support for the autonomy of music: "I don't want my music to become a vehicle for propaganda in the way it has for Steve Martland or Louis Andriessen. I think that once it becomes this, it immediately diminishes the art-form, which should exist in its own right, not as a tool for an alternative cause."⁹⁵ This statement stands in direct contrast to Eisler's and Andriessen's main musical objective, that music should be politically engaged, and consequently it complicates the manner in which MacMillan should be considered alongside Eisler and Andriessen. It is therefore necessary to examine some of the specific political ideals of each composer, in order to ascertain how MacMillan's music might be defined as 'political' in relation to the political music of Eisler and Andriessen.

Eisler's edict that "music's autonomy had to be relinquished"⁹⁶ did not manifest itself in his music without some preliminary difficulties, namely generic adaptation. He considered music to have an obligation to actively and fully engage with social concerns of the time,

Robert Craft. 1982. *Dialogues*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 50-52.

⁹³ Schoenberg, quoted in Betz, 1982: 44.

⁹⁴ Betz, 1982: 67.

⁹⁵ In interview with the composer, 1.2.08.

⁹⁶ Betz, 1982: 67.

always asking “for whom it was necessary to compose”.⁹⁷ Eisler soon adapted to the agitprop style of composition with ease, quickly learning how to express himself in a way that workers would understand.⁹⁸

It is this type of politically-driven music that dominates the majority of Andriessen’s output. Andriessen considers social structures to be an integral part of the musical work:

Many composers feel that the act of composing is “suprasocial”. I don’t agree. How you arrange your musical material, what you do with it, the techniques you use, the instruments you score for, all this is determined to a large extent by your own social circumstances, your education, environment and listening experience, and the availability – or non-availability – of symphony orchestras and government grants.⁹⁹

However, while this connection between music and politics remained/remains a central aesthetic to both composers, Andriessen laments the power it possessed in the first half of the twentieth century, compared to the nonchalant reaction of Western governments today. Recalling Brecht’s return to Europe after the war, Andriessen explains why the playwright chose to settle in East Germany: “The first play he wrote there was censored by the party. But Brecht said to the Western journalists, ‘In what Western country would the government take the time and trouble to spend thirty hours discussing my plays with me?’”¹⁰⁰

In addition to revealing different levels of state involvement in the arts according to one’s geography and time period, this Brechtian example Andriessen offers is useful in describing the distinction between music and literature as media of political expression. MacMillan has written much politically-charged music, but none of this has caused the extent of controversy generated by his ‘Scotland’s Shame’ speech (See Chapter Two). Perhaps this reveals something of the political rhetoric of literature over that of music, that the latter arguably has more force than the former. Certainly the incorporation of

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Betz, 1982: 64.

⁹⁹ Andriessen, 1991: 2.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

a political text in a musical work makes the piece explicitly political, but there are other factors to consider here which are relevant to music both with and without words, for the very methodology of a work's composition can reveal a political impetus. MacMillan claims (above) he does not want to proselytize, since this reduces music to a mere propaganda tool. Andriessen has also claimed that he does not wish to convert listeners with his music, yet this requires further elaboration. The terms 'politically themed music' and 'politically engaged music' are employed below to help distinguish MacMillan from Andriessen and Eisler.

Politically Engaged Music

Andriessen famously said that there is no such thing as a fascist dominant seventh, qualifying this by adding that while abstract musical material – pitch, duration and rhythm – is simply part of nature (and is therefore suprasocial), how this musical material is handled, the techniques one uses, the instruments one scores for, etc. is determined to a large extent by one's own social circumstances.¹⁰¹ While all music may be socially conditioned, this does not necessarily make it *political*. A composer may receive a commission from the BBC to write for an orchestra. The scoring of the piece has therefore, to some extent, been conditioned: it is to be orchestral.

However, Andriessen's works extend beyond the political to become 'politically engaged'. By this, I mean that the music itself has been governed by a political commitment – a commitment not to convert listeners to Marxism but to actively promote social consciousness. Andriessen willingly admits this: "Seeing revolution on the streets, I realized that my choice of [musical style] had to involve both the musicians and the world".¹⁰² This aesthetic is demonstrated in his music: Andriessen refuses to write for symphony orchestras,

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Andriessen, quoted in Schwarz, 1994: 4.

preferring to write only for groups where there is a democratic relationship between the musicians and the composer.¹⁰³ He has written numerous pieces for the instrumental group, Orkest De Volharding, which was “equally at home at street demonstrations or in concert halls”.¹⁰⁴ Political subjects often govern his works, such as *De Staat*, a mini-opera based on Plato’s *The Republic*, and he is political even in the distribution of his music, appearing only on relatively minor, independent record labels (most notably Nonesuch), while MacMillan’s music has been recorded by more commercially known record companies such as Deutsche Grammophon, BIS, Hyperion, Naxos, Linn and Chandos.

Eisler’s music might also be considered ‘politically engaged’, since the deliberately contradictory nature of his music set to Brecht’s writings was designed to cause an intellectual, critical, political response from the listener. Film-makers such as Joris Ivens and Sergei Eisenstein made great use of ‘montage technique’ in the 1920s, and the latter came to formulate a theory of montage, aided by developments in literature (Russian Formalism) and politics.¹⁰⁵ Montage was employed by Brecht and Eisler to create psychological discomfort in the audience, that they might not simply be entertained, but forced to consider the performance intellectually. By writing music that didn’t seem to ‘fit’ the text of the song, Eisler was writing music that was politically engaged: it was shaped by the purpose to contradict Brecht’s texts, in order to create the critical response.

Andriessen and Schönberger are keen to point out the subtle distinction between ‘montage’ and ‘collage’ in the arts, explaining that in collage, the separate elements are less important than the contrast which they form among themselves, whereas in montage, the contrast between the structurally related elements causes one to seek the identity of the separate elements.¹⁰⁶ Collage therefore might be

¹⁰³ Schwarz, 1994: 4.

¹⁰⁴ Schwarz, 1994: 5.

¹⁰⁵ Andriessen and Schönberger, 1989: 161.

¹⁰⁶ Andriessen and Schönberger, 1989: 163.

identified in the music of 'Les Six', whose use of juxtaposition for its own sake was the central aspect of the group's music.¹⁰⁷ Collage is focused specifically on the shock value of the juxtaposition of disparate elements. Montage, on the other hand, while including disparate elements, is aimed at drawing attention to each of these elements. There is still juxtaposition in montage, since the elements are contrasting, but this is a means rather than an end (whereas in collage juxtaposition is the end, and the disparate elements are the means). In montage, the separate elements themselves are important, and the placing of these disparate elements alongside each other (juxtaposition) engenders a critical approach to these elements. In certain contexts therefore, it is possible for collage and montage to seem very similar, but the intention in the placing of the elements differs, and because of this, the sense of juxtaposition in collage will generally be more pronounced.

Eisler was not the only composer to use the Brechtian montage approach. Andriessen has also used this effect, indeed, he has even set music to Brecht's *Lehrstück*, *Die Massnahme* (The Measures taken), which originally had music composed for it by Eisler. Robert Adlington has documented Andriessen's treatment of this Brechtian work at length, claiming that the model established by Eisler and Brecht in their *Lehrstücke* (learning plays) provided a framework for Andriessen's own attempts to reconcile popular and progressive elements within a politically committed context.

Andriessen's treatment of this learning play provides an appropriate example of both politically engaged music and montage effect. First, the practical considerations are taken into consideration. Small musical forces rendered Eisler's original music, which involves an instrumental ensemble and a large chorus, unusable, but music formed such an essential part of the work's conception that Andriessen was

¹⁰⁷ Perhaps one of the most famous examples of Les Six's collage music is *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*, written in 1921 as a collaboration project by Milhaud, Auric, Tailleferre, Honegger and Poulenc, on a scenario by Cocteau.

asked to join the group and develop new settings.¹⁰⁸ Second, the contradictory, didactic aim of the work is expressed. It stressed the Lehrstück's function as a "learning experience for the makers themselves," in which the "participants would learn about themselves and their own position in society, about the dilemmas, the paradoxes and contradictions they lived in."¹⁰⁹ In line with Steinweg's interpretation, public performance was not the main intention of the Theatre School project.¹¹⁰

This last point is significant. Andriessen, like Eisler – and indeed, MacMillan – is not trying to convert listeners with his music. Brecht and Eisler specifically claimed that *Die Massnahme* was not written for an audience but exclusively for the instruction of the performers,¹¹¹ while Andriessen has also declared: "most music I write is written, I think, first of all for the performers. Your musicians are your first audience".¹¹² This emphasizes another point of distinction between MacMillan and both Andriessen and Eisler, for while the former may occasionally write with a specific performer in mind (such as the orchestra or soloist who has commissioned the work), this is in no way related to the political – or indeed religious – beliefs or ideologies of the performer(s). The ensembles for whom MacMillan wrote several political works from his Liberation Theology period gives testament to this: *Cantos Sagrados* was commissioned by the Scottish Chamber Choir with subsidy from the Scottish Arts Council; *Búsqueda* was commissioned by the Edinburgh Contemporary Arts Trust in 1988 with subsidy from the Scottish Arts Council; the original version of *The Exorcism of Rio Sumpul*, using single strings, was commissioned by the Paragon Ensemble for the Glasgow 1990 City of Culture celebrations; and, written to celebrate the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, *Sowetan Spring* was a BASBWE (British Association of Symphonic

¹⁰⁸ Adlington, 2004: 384.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Eisler, quoted in Adlington, 2004: 388.

¹¹² Andriessen, quoted in Adlington, 2004: 389.

Bands and Wind Ensembles) commission, to mark Glasgow's designation as The Cultural Capital of Europe in 1990. It is ironic that the last of these politically-driven works was inspired by none other than Andriessen himself, as the thirty-one year old MacMillan reveals in his programme note for the work: "I have for many years been fascinated by the music of the Dutch composer Louis Andriessen and especially by his handling of antiphonal hocketing effects. So much so that I have been tempted into writing a hocket of my own on a number of occasions".¹¹³ *Sowetan Spring* is one such work, making prominent use of the hocketing technique between groups of instruments throughout its duration.

Despite this musical influence however, the philosophies of MacMillan and Andriessen differ to significant degree. As noted above, Andriessen actively avoids the kind of established musical institutions for which MacMillan composes, preferring to write specifically for ensembles whose members share his commitment to political awareness, educating them through the contradictory, montage style of the Brechtian *Lehrstück*. Stravinsky, a key source of inspiration for Andriessen, also made use of montage technique. Although Stravinsky's use of montage was for purely musical reasons, his treatment of this technique made an impact on both Andriessen and Brecht. The montage form evident in *L'Histoire du soldat*, first performed in 1918, came nine years before the premiere of *Mahagonny Songspiel*, and having seen *Oedipus Rex* in 1927, Brecht cried out: 'One must simply copy that'.¹¹⁴

While Stravinsky's montage music clearly excited Brecht, the composer's adoption of this technique was for stylistic reasons, rather than political motives. Brecht quickly realized that this style lent itself very well to agitprop arts, and as the statement quoted above testifies, he later used this effect in many of his works, including numerous collaborations with Eisler. It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that Stravinsky should be aesthetically similar to Schoenberg with regard to

¹¹³ MacMillan, 1990 <<http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/James-MacMillan-Sowetan-Spring/2892>>

¹¹⁴ Andriessen and Schönberger, 1989: 166.

music's distinction from politics, yet on a purely technical or stylistic level, his approach inspired Brecht *et al.*'s (political) use of montage. However, to some extent it is unsurprising that Stravinsky used montage technique. Like Eisler, Stravinsky despised the music dramas of Wagner, and the concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* was completely rejected by the two composers, for it represented the antithesis of Brechtian 'epic theatre', which sought to educate listeners through the juxtaposition of disparate elements. Brecht mentioned not only the strict training required by working-class theatres to master the tasks proposed by epic theatre, but also the fact that such theatres had a duty to train their public.¹¹⁵ Although Marxism was the ideology that inspired Brecht, Eisler and Andriessen, each figure sought to rouse critical thinking from the masses rather than gain Marxist converts, and the contradictions of epic theatre and montage facilitated this social criticism.

In the late 1980s, MacMillan also began experimenting with montage effect in his political works. *Búsqueda* combines texts from the liturgy of the Mass with political poetry. It uses the Ordinary sections of the Mass (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei) as a structural scaffolding, interspersing these sections with poems of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Because these poems already include many religious allusions, the expected sense of juxtaposition in this piece is softened, certainly in relation to both collage and Brecht and Eisler's montage technique. This combination of political and religious texts could be likened instead to Britten's *War Requiem*, where the Latin Requiem Mass texts are interwoven with several of Wilfred Owens' war poems. Yet while the *War Requiem* remains unmistakably a requiem, *Búsqueda* could never be confused for a mass setting, since its references to the mass are relatively minimal. It is part mass, part political music theatre work, and MacMillan's approach therefore lies somewhere between Brecht and Eisler's montage, with its placement of disparate elements,

¹¹⁵ Brecht, 1974: 88.

and Britten's seamless synthesis.¹¹⁶ This important work is discussed in Chapter One of this study in the context of Liberation Theology, and in Chapter Six, in conjunction with Berio's *Laborintus II*.

Politically Themed Music

Like 'politically engaged music', what I call 'politically themed music' is defined as music which has a political subject, but differs from politically engaged music in that it has *not* been organized according to the political subject. This distinction is best demonstrated through one of the most famous works of the twentieth century: Penderecki's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima*. Not only is there nothing in the music itself to suggest a political motive, but this point is supported by the fact that its title was famously added after its composition. In its original conception, the work was absolute music. Only through the assignment of its title did it adopt a political meaning. Similarly, the majority of MacMillan's political music is politically themed rather than politically engaged: the actual music of *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* does not express a political agenda. To listen to this orchestral tone poem without any prior information of its programme (including its title), the narrative of a woman accused of witchcraft and being burned at the stake is not conveyed through purely musical means.

MacMillan has often expressed his concern that music should not proselytize – a feature he consciously tries to avoid in his own works. It is the controlling political feature over the approach to composition that perhaps best distinguishes politically engaged musical from politically themed music. Politically engaged music is composed in such a way as to actively raise political awareness; politically themed music, despite its sometimes overt political message, does not. Politically themed music simply assumes an extramusical political message, while politically engaged music has an extramusical political

¹¹⁶ The profound implications of this combination of various musical styles in MacMillan's music, first heard in *Búsqüeda*, is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Six, which considers MacMillan's preference for polystylism in many of his works.

message but is also directly and fundamentally affected by this message, exhibited in its scoring or the space in which it is intended to be performed.

These two categories do not encompass all political music however. Shostakovich is one of several 'political composers' who reveal the problems that arise in applying each term too rigidly, for while the vast majority of his works were absolute (the symphonies, the concertos, the string quartets), much of the music Shostakovich composed was politically controlled.¹¹⁷ Composers were obliged to adhere to certain, conservative parameters, and their music was shaped by its Soviet environment. However, it must be stressed that such conditions were imposed upon Shostakovich. MacMillan does not write under these conditions and for this reason it is appropriate to consider him with reference not to Shostakovich, but to Eisler and Andriessen, who had the choice of deciding whether or not their music should be politically dominated. While Schoenberg could not reconcile the combination of music with politics, Eisler saw an inextricable link between the two, so much so that he deemed anyone who would not appreciate this link to be stupid: "*What causes stupidity in music at the present time? Aloofness to, disinterest of and aversion to politics*" (1958).¹¹⁸

Adapting for a cause: Politics and Religion

The agitprop ethos adopted by Andriessen and Eisler is very much based on the principle of music fuelled by the encouragement of political awareness. The same cannot be said of MacMillan's music, though he does not reject political expression through the medium of music. In other words, the extent to which the political element governs and dictates the music determines its 'engaged'/'themed' description.

¹¹⁷ One need only consider the reaction of outrage at the Fourth Symphony or the opera, *Lady MacBeth of Mtsensk*, to appreciate the control this regime held over artists.

¹¹⁸ Eisler, 1978: 197.

However, it is interesting that while MacMillan criticizes politically engaged music, he is far more willing to allow an ulterior motive to dominate the nature of a piece. It is not so much that MacMillan is opposed to the utility of music per se, rather, he is specifically against its use for political propaganda. Despite Andriessen's claims of the opposite, MacMillan interprets the strong political element in Andriessen's music as a form of prozelytising. He does not assert that political opinions should not be expressed through music, but the manner in which this expression occurs is important, and should not render the musical aesthetic subservient.

One might initially interpret MacMillan's condemnation of politically engaged music as promotion of music's autonomy, especially his comment that using music as agitprop "immediately diminishes the art-form, which should exist in its own right, not as a tool for an alternative cause".¹¹⁹ This opinion is shared by Stravinsky: "There is a tendency to turn the mind away from what I call the higher mathematics of music in order to degrade music to servile employment, and to vulgarize it by adapting it to the requirements of elementary utilitarianism".¹²⁰ No doubt MacMillan would also oppose such action, yet he does adapt his musical style for an alternative cause, and is less concerned with the aesthetic value of a work being subservient in the context of writing for congregations.

MacMillan's involvement with liturgical music bears a striking resemblance to Eisler's and Andriessen's promotion of political consciousness through music. His three congregational mass settings and numerous psalm settings are, according to the same criteria employed to define politically engaged, examples of congregational music. This music has been written in a particular style – atypical to the composer's non-liturgical music - and this style has been governed by the proficiency of its performer(s). Indeed, MacMillan has even said, with reference to writing music for the congregation: "I think it is

¹¹⁹ In interview with the composer, 1.2.08.

¹²⁰ Stravinsky, 1970: 47.

necessary to remove the ego to produce something very simple for the purpose of worship. It's not about leaving a thumbprint. It's about connecting the community".¹²¹ This removal of the ego poses great challenges, not least because of the logistical considerations that must be considered when writing such music, most significantly, whether the music is accessible and easy to perform by people of all musical standards. MacMillan has admitted that his *Galloway Mass* was more taxing to write than his Symphony 'Vigil' – an hour-long, complex and densely orchestrated work.¹²²

Although he has written very few works with explicitly political subjects since 1995, it could reasonably be suggested that MacMillan's early, socialist traits remain implicitly present in these 'practical' congregational works. This simple, functional style can be found consistently throughout his compositional output, beginning with his first congregational mass setting, the *St Anne's Mass* (1985). MacMillan writes new material for his local parish Church every week, usually a psalm setting. This quasi-Bachian practice is therefore not so much Communist as Christian, joining a community together, but for the purpose of worship, not a social structure. (This topic of congregational writing is explored in greater detail below in conjunction with Bach, in Chapter Four).

An aesthetic central to both MacMillan and Eisler is the idea of music for a wide audience, while maintaining a sense of artistic integrity and progression. Despite being successful in many compositional styles, from twelve-tone works to jazz, and workers' choruses to Hollywood film scores, Eisler was concerned that genres should not be confused: "A children's song is not a string quartet, a symphonic movement not a workers' song. Anyone who muddles up the genres will remain a fool".¹²³ Similarly, MacMillan's congregational music does not include the technically challenging music found in his more complex choral works.

¹²¹ In conversation with the composer, 21.2.08.

¹²² Burrows, 1999: 248.

¹²³ Eisler, 1978: 195.

Despite his avoidance of music as political rhetoric, MacMillan's attitude is not entirely dissimilar from Eisler's, especially in both composers' concern that music should engage socially. Eisler was worried that modern music 'turned a deaf ear' to the conflicts of its times and its social confrontations, and this disturbed him to such an extent that he wanted to break away from it.¹²⁴ MacMillan also engages with conflict in his music, be it current political issues or the tension between the suffering of the crucifixion and the joy of the resurrection in his religious works, theological confrontations which many of his contemporaries who write religious music (Arvo Pärt, John Tavener etc.) try to avoid. However, since the mid-1990s, this balance between politics and religion has shifted, such that MacMillan has moved away from the liberalism of the Left to the Centre-Right, claiming that the Christian faith alone is able to cater for both theological and social problems.

¹²⁴ Betz, 1978: 43.